LETTERS

Reſpecting the Performances

AT THE

THEATRE ROYAL, EDINBURGH,

Originally Addreſſed to the

EDITOR OF THE SCOTS CHRONICLE,

UNDER THE SIGNATURE OF

TIMOTHY PLAIN,

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Address by the Editor.

A TASTE for DRAMATIC ENTERTAINMENTS being now univerſal throughout Britain, it is unneceſſary for the Editor to introduce the following Letters to the attention of the public with any remark, except, that during the management of Mr Stephen Kemble, the Theatrical amuſements of Edinburgh were conducted in a manner certainly far inferior to what the metropolis of Scotland had a right to expect, and had formerly been accuſtomed to ſee: In a city which can boaſt of as accompliſhed and ſelect an audience as any in Britain, it was natural to ſuppoſe that this would not

be overlooked: and, accordingly, different pens have been exerciſed upon the ſubject: among others, the Letters of TIMOTHY PLAIN have ſtood moſt conſpicuous; that Critic having not only taken the lead, but been uniformly allowed to unite, with the juſtice of his ſatire, a mode of diſpenſing it, at once lively and ſevere.

The Editor having often heard a wiſh expreſſed, that theſe Letters ſhould be reprinted and publiſhed in a volume by themſelves, he now offers them in that ſtate to the public.—With the view of enhancing the value of the publication, he was deſirous of a preface from the author in the ſtile of the Letters themſelves; but his moſt diligent enquiries have proved unſucceſsful—This he regrets the more, as the Author might alſo have reviſed the Letters, previous to their being again ſub-

mitted to the public, ſome of them having evidently been written *currente calamo*, and rather in a hurried and inattentive manner: in lieu of this he has, in a few inſtances, taken the liberty of making ſome ſmall alterations himſelf, where it was evident that overſight alone could have made the expreſſion come from the pen of Timothy, in the way it was originally publiſhed.

LETTERS

RESPECTING THE PERFORMANCES

AT THE

THEATRE ROYAL, EDINBURGH.

FAIR PENITENT.

TO THE

EDITOR OF THE SCOTS CHRONICLE.

SIR,

BEING an admirer of theatrical repreſentation, as the moſt rational, as well as the moſt inſtructive amuſement, I have occaſionally attended the theatre in this city for upwards of twenty years.

Till lately, Edinburgh was ſtamped, by all ranks in the three kingdoms, even by

actors themſelves, as a critical, judicious audience. It was not in London, nor anywhere elſe, viewed as a *country* theatre. When any performer had met with a decent portion of applauſe in Edinburgh, go where he would thereafter, it was paſted up in capitals, "The part of Romeo, &c. "by Mr —— *from Edinburgh*," in the ſame way as they are announced when they have played in London or Dublin; but, alas! if we do not reſume "our muſe "of fire," to come from *Edinburgh* will be a diſgrace, rather than a recommendation.

I do not wiſh to be ſevere, Mr Editor; but when I ſee the Edinburgh audience inſulted, and in a manner told, that we muſt take the *droſs* of all theatres, merely becauſe the Manager now and then treats us with a peep of his ſiſter, the

Siddons, and his brother John, who indeed do honour to the ſtage, I'll ſpeak, though all the troop " ſhould gape, and " bid me hold my peace."

We are entitled to as good a company as any out of London. We have generally had ſuch a company. Mr Kemble himſelf has been one of the number; and why we ſhould now look on, and ſee common ſenſe murdered, is aſtoniſhing to me.

I admit we *have* performers of ſome merit here. Mr Woods, as an actor, and as a man, needs no panegyric from me.—The Manager himſelf, keep him in a certain line, may be agreeable. Mr Rock is very admiſſible, as a low comedian; and Mr Scriven might paſs, were it not for a certain pertneſs in his manner, which muſt always diſguſt. Mrs Kemble is a good ac-

treſs in many characters. Miſs Gough is a good figure, and her abilities far above mediocrity; though ſhe will never go down as an object to draw a houſe *of herſelf*, which Mr Kemble ſeems to ſuppoſe.——But where have we a Ranger, a Doricourt, an Archer, a Benedict, a Lord Foppington, a Jeſſamy, or a Lord Trinket? Where have we a lady for genteel comedy,—a male or a female ſinger of any note? And, ſurely, it will not be ſaid, we ought not to have all theſe.

At the requeſt of a friend, I went laſt night to ſee the FAIR PENITENT, a play I have often ſeen well performed. The plot of this piece is ſo well known that I need not enter upon it. SCIOLTO is a nobleman nice in honour, delicate in his patronage, and warm in his parental affection. In my idea, this character ſat rather heavy on

Mr Woods. I know he is fond of it. I have frequently ſeen him perform it; and, from his abilities, as well as his knowledge of his author, and acquaintance with the ſtage, he cannot be cenſured in the part; but candour muſt admit, that where pathos is neceſſary, it is not his *forte*. He poſſeſſed, however, conſiderable merit in the outſet of the laſt ſcene with CALISTA, but from the time of giving her the dagger, the requiſite feelings, during the reſt of the ſcene, were rather beyond his natural powers.

HORATIO is an amiable character, but his zeal in friendſhip leads him, perhaps, beyond the bounds of prudence. Mr Kemble's figure was not in his favour for the part. But, "with all his im-"perfections," he was the beſt Horatio I have ſeen theſe ſeveral years. He ſuſtained

both the ſedateneſs and ſpirit of the character with propriety. I am confident he never in his life ſpoke two ſpeeches better than thoſe in the ſecond act, in the ſcene with Lothario, beginning,

" Away—no woman could deſcend ſo low!"
And———" 'Tis falſe!
" Ye blaſt the fair with lies," &c.

And I am equally certain, that no theatrical candidate ever appeared in a more unfortunate point of view than Mr Melvin did at the ſame moment in LOTHARIO.—This character is the moſt reproachable in the piece, and I do not know that a more dangerous one has ever been repreſented on the ſtage. The actor who performs this part, muſt be ſprightly, voluble, and able to diſplay both love and courage. Mr Melvin, in LOTHARIO, neither looked nor ſpoke the part ſo as even to be entitled to criticiſm He was laborious in declamatory

ſcenes; turbulent in the ſpirited ones, and coarſe in thoſe of a ſoft nature. True it is, he "ſtrutted and bellowed," but he had neither the accent, nor the gait ſuitable to the character.

ALTAMONT is generous and ſincere, but poſſeſſes very weak principles. I own, that any actor, if not of uncommon abilities, muſt be languid in this part; but of Mr Bew, in the fond, forgiving huſband, I can only ſay, "I diſlike thy perſon, thy manner, thy every thing." If neceſſity has forced this gentleman to turn actor, I pity him; if it is his choice, I ſincerely adviſe him to "put money in his purſe" by ſome more certain and leſs dangerous employment.

CALISTA poſſeſſes great pride and violent paſſions. Miſs Gough is a young ac-

treſs, I believe; her perſon is both genteel and graceful. She ſupported the paſſages of tenderneſs with much feeling and propriety; and to this, her voice was perfectly adequate: But, in the laſt act, her countenance was not ſufficiently expreſſive, nor was her grief of that affecting nature required for Caliſta.—This lady, however, with more experience on the ſtage, promiſes fair to have a juſt claim to a firſt line of characters in the buſkin.

Miſs Kemble is a jolly laſs, and, in LAVINIA, eſcaped the *gooſe*.

I am, Sir,

Your very humble ſervant,

TIMOTHY PLAIN.

EDIN. Feb. 1, 1797.

RICHARD III.

SIR,

I WENT laſt night to RICHARD III.—This play, as originally written by Shakeſpeare, was rather dull for the ſtage; and the lovers of the drama are much indebted to Cibber for his improvements, altho', in making them, he has plundered the three hiſtorical plays of HENRY VI. of almoſt every good line.

RICHARD, in figure, ſentiment, language, and conduct, is an *unique*.—The character is finely drawn by Shakeſpeare:

" Let this word, *Love*, which grey beards call di-
" vine,
" Be reſident in men like one another,
" And not in me—*I am myſelf alone.*"

I was ſorry to ſee Mr Kemble in the part; for, though I think him *energetic* in ſentimental declamation, and in the blunt, honeſt, manly caſt of parts, I cannot be of opinion that he is a proper repreſentative of the "*lean*, ſhrunk, withered" Richard. "A man of his kidney!—think of that—"as ſubject to heat as butter; a man of "continual diſſolution and thaw—it was a "miracle to eſcape ſuffocation." The moſt determined gravity was forced to give way, when he declared himſelf "not half made "up!"—I don't mean to ſay, that he was deſpicable throughout the part; on the contrary, he *ſpoke* the three firſt acts well; but, I think, he was totally inadequate to the agitating circumſtances of the two laſt, although he *worked* through them with a perſeverance in *toil*, which was the only commendable trait in his performance; and, after a hard fought battle, he literally

bit the duſt; for, knowing his weak ſide, with infinite propriety, he rolled upon *it*, and died *cul par deſſus*.

HENRY VI. ſhould be pathetic, with dignity, remembering he is a King and a Father. Mr Bew ſeemed to be neither. He was lamentable. I would beg leave to inform this gentleman of a fact, if he does not know it already.—Where Nature has placed her decided negative, neither a buſhy wig, nor a chalked chin, can give the deportment of a noble mind labouring under misfortunes.

What ſhall I ſay of Mr Siddons, in the gallant, generous RICHMOND? He was, indeed, as his rival calls him, "the ſhallow Richmond."—If coolneſs, even ten degrees beyond inſipidity, be the characteriſ-

tic of a hero, this part was moſt heroically performed—

" Twas pitiful, 'twas wond'rous pitiful."

BUCKINGHAM, is a villainous part. A mean raſcally tool of a tyrant, who ſells his country, his conſcience, and his king, without even getting the modern reward of a penſion; but merely on the promiſe of

" The Earldom of Hereford, and thoſe moveables
" Whereof the King, my brother, ſtood poſſeſſed."

With all this load of infamy, he has not even one good ſpeech; and, what could Woods, or any man, make of him?

The QUEEN is a character of much reſpect; her woes are touching, and Miſs Gough did the part great juſtice. That critic muſt have had more peeviſhneſs than ſenſibility, who was not highly pleaſed with the parting ſcene in the Tower.

LADY ANN is painful to the audience, painful to the actreſs; and, while we pity her fate, we deſpiſe the woman. Miſs Kemble's "round, unthinking face" made her a very good figure for the *dupe* of Richard. But, let me tell the lady, ſhe's "too fat for a Ghoſt."

By the bye, where *Ghoſts* are introduced, I think it is a great improvement to make them walk on and off, inſtead of riſing through ſqueaking trap-doors; and I give the Manager credit for the improvement; for, I think no ghoſt ſhould riſe or ſink through a trap-door, but that of *Gaffer Thumb*.

I am &c.

EDIN. Feb. 3, 1797. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

MACBETH.

SIR,

SHAKESPEARE was not more remarkable for the dignity of his characters, ſtrength of expreſſion, and elevation of ſentiment, than for the happy choice of his ſubjects. The Tragedy of MACBETH is more regular than many others, but it gives a horrid picture of the human heart. Neither the witches nor the ghoſts (though what reſpects them is admirably written) will bear criticiſm; but Macbeth and his Lady afford uncommon ſcope for ſhowing the powers of an actor; and, upon the whole, it is a fine dramatic ſtructure, with ſome blemiſhes.

MACBETH requires a bold, graceful, ſoldier-like figure, ſtrong marking features,

and a firm, deep, extenſive voice. The ſpeech as to the dagger of " the mind" is written in a moſt nervous ſtile of expreſſion, and conveys a ſtriking picture of Macbeth's alarmed tho' determined ſpirit; —the imaginary dagger—the deſcription of night, &c. act powerfully even in the cloſet, but much more ſo on the ſtage.— The ſcene of the murder is moſt admirably calculated for action.

From the ſpecimens I have had of the preſent performers upon the Edinburgh ſtage, I could not think that they were capable of doing this play juſtice, and therefore I went to ſee it laſt night, not ſo much in expectation of being gratified, as out of curioſity.

Kemble performed the part of Macbeth. with regard to his *figure*, I paſs it over;—

as to his acting, he was the ſame from firſt to laſt in feature, deportment, and action. His voice was throughout raiſed above its natural pitch;—the roaring of

——"the rugged Ruſſian bear,
"The arm'd rhinoceros, or Hyrcanian tyger,"

might have been louder, but not more diſcordant. He *fought* through the part as if the whole merit conſiſted in turbulence, noiſe, and declamation;—it was painful to ſee his over-exertions,

The ſcene with the murderers of Banquo was given in the ſtile of a man haranguing a popular aſſembly,—of a man proud of his actions; not in that ſuited to the dark and diſmal deed he was hiring theſe men to perform.—In the banquet ſcene, when he ought to have addreſſed his gueſts,

"I do forget.
"Do not muſe at me, my moſt worthy friends,"

Mr Kemble turned his back upon the company, and addreſſed the audience.

I will venture to affirm, that if Mr Kemble had been allowed to perform Macbeth, when he formed one of the Edinburgh company, the Manager would have been reprobated for preſuming to offer ſuch a repreſentative of the part to the public.—Mr Kemble would ſhow more judgment if he would confine himſelf to plain ſentimental characters. In theſe he appears to much advantage.

MACDUFF requires a good figure, a ſmooth flow of expreſſion, a medium toned voice, tender feelings, and ſpirit.—Mr Woods performed this part with his uſual chaſteneſs of acting; and although his grief did not enforce many tears, in the ſcene where the deſtruction of his family

is announced to him, he played the character reſpectably.

Banquo being confined to level ſpeaking, requires little more than a good external appearance, and decent utterance; Mr Bew walked through the part.

Lady Macbeth, which, I think, in ſome reſpects an unnatural character, ſhould be a commanding figure—graceful in deportment—poſſeſſed of a full toned voice, with a ſtrength and haughtineſs of feature to mark ſtrong paſſion—Never were the anxious horrors of conſcious guilt more naturally, or more nervouſly painted, than in her ſleeping ſcene, where the features ſhould be perfectly horror-ſtruck.

Miſs Gough is certainly an actreſs of merit, but the part of Lady Macbeth does

not appear to ſuit her abilities. She cannot aſſume that determined firmneſs of look and deportment, which is characteriſtic of the part. In the ſleeping ſcene, little apparent horror was expreſſed;—ſhe ſeemed to be rather in a ſort of torpid apathy.—I am, &c.

EDIN. Feb. 3, 1797. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

RIVALS.

SIR,

THE RIVALS is an admirable Comedy.—The Manager, in announcing it to the Public, was pleaſed to add to the bill this note:—"Mr Kemble, with the ut-"moſt deference, recommends the conſi-"deration of the caſt of the above Come-"dy to the Public. He flatters himſelf no "company in Great Britain can perform

"it to more advantage*." It may be thought no great proof of Mr Kemble's modeſty, thus to announce himſelf the firſt Sir ANTHONY ABSOLUTE in Britain, whatever private opinion he may have the comfort of entertaining on the ſubject; and it certainly was ſtill leſs a proof of his prudence. To raiſe expectation too high, generally ends in diſguſting the entertained, and mortifying the entertainer, if he has "that within" which is capable of feeling mortification. Had I expected leſs, I ſhould have been tolerably pleaſed laſt night; but, looking for what I was promiſed, I felt as if I had been invited to a ſumptuous feaſt, and treated with ſallad and ſmall beer.

The character of Sir ANTHONY ABSOLUTE is nearly compriſed in his name.—

* Edinburgh Evening Courant, Thurſday, 2d Feb.

He is, as he ſays, the eaſieſt led man in the world, " give him every thing his own " way." To do juſtice to the part, requires that tranſition of feature from anger to liſtening, from liſtening to ſatisfaction, and from ſatisfaction to the moſt good humoured joy, which the inimitable Dick Johnſton ſo eminently poſſeſſed, but to which the inflexible face of Mr Kemble is an utter ſtranger. Neither do I think that the admiration of Sir Anthony, when deſcribing the beauties of Lydia Languiſh, ought to be accompanied with that laſcivious yell which Mr Kemble uttered with ſuch ſeeming *feeling*, and which has been ſo faſhionable among actors ſince the introduction of PEEPING TOM. To have thought of Mr Kemble what he ſeems to think of himſelf, would require us " to " forget what we have ſeen, ſeeing, what " we now ſee."

Mr Woods, in CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE, was chaſte and correct; but, while there was nothing to blame, there was little to praiſe. I have ſeen him play the part with ten times more animation; and I really enjoyed little pleaſure from his laſt night's appearance.

FALKLAND is ſuch a ſelf-tormentor, that one would almoſt ſay he "o'erſteps the "modeſty of nature." The delicacy of his feelings leads him to expect perfection, but does not enable him to judge of it, when he has nearly found it. He is reſtleſs and uneaſy in himſelf, and teazingly troubleſome to others. I could wiſh Mr Siddons would either try ſuch parts as might enable me in conſcience to ſay ſomething in his praiſe, or to paſs him over altogether. He only ſpoke one line to which the audience ſeemed heartily to aſſent;

"'Sdeath, what a dog I am!"

ACRES is a coxcomb, a bully, and a coward. Mr Scriven was pretty well in the two firſt; but in the latter his fears degenerated into the extravagant horrors of the Taylor of Brentford.—As painters ſay, there was no *keeping* in his acting.

I muſt not omit DAVY. The part was performed with humour and ſimplicity, without buffoonery. I do not remember of ever ſeeing it better done than laſt night by Mr Rock.

Mr Hallion, in Sir LUCIUS O'TRIGGER, ſpoke the Iriſh brogue.

"'Twas wanting what ſhould follow."

Mrs Kemble has a ſomething about her, which raiſes her much above the giddy girl of ſeventeen, delighted at an elopement, and mortified at the attainment of her wi-

ſhes in another way.—Her face and voice impreſs us with an idea quite different from her words, in the part of LYDIA LANGUISH.—She was, however, as ſhe generally is, extremely intereſting.

JULIA is a ſentimental part; and therefore, as nearly allied to Tragedy, it ſuited Miſs Gough very well. I am more and more convinced, that this lady ought to ſtick to the buſkin. If ſhe ſhall proceed in this walk, into which ſhe has been led by the hand of Nature herſelf, I venture to prognoſticate that ſhe will riſe to a very high degree of excellence.—It is natural for a young ambitious mind, conſcious of vigorous powers, to aſpire at univerſal merit. But a much ſafer and ſurer path to fame, is to cultivate ſuperior proficiency in a few leading and congenial characters.—

" Art is vaſt," ſays Mr Pope, " and hu-
" man wit is narrow,"—

" Not only bounded by peculiar arts,
" But even, in theſe, confin'd to ſingle parts."

Miſs Gough is entitled to the reſpect of every perſon of taſte, and lover of the drama; and I flatter myſelf ſhe has too much good ſenſe to be offended by the honeſt plainneſs of my obſervations. I ſhall make my bow to the lady on the preſent occaſion, with only adding, in concluſion of the above well-meant ſuggeſtions, the following aſſurance—that whoever thinks to be, or to ſee, an *univerſal actreſs*, or actor,

" Thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor e'er ſhall be."

It would be improper to paſs over Mrs Walcot, who did great juſtice to the part of Mrs MALLAPROP—*our* Sir Anthony may conſider himſelf much obliged to her

for bearing him through ſome of his moſt *weighty* ſcenes.—I am, &c.

EDIN. Feb 14, 1797. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

TAMERLANE.

SIR,

THE play of TAMERLANE, like many other plays, poems, and pamphlets, owes its birth to flattery, and its original ſucceſs to political auxiliaries. It is well known, that the part of TAMERLANE was intended for William III., and that of BAJAZET for his rival, Louis XIV.; and as Mr Rowe meant to puff the one, and to decry the other, without either juſtice or truth, he cared little for the real hiſtory of his hero, but arbitrarily aſſigned to him ſuch virtues as ſuited his own proſpects of perſonal reward and emolument.—Poets as well as

painters wiſh to ſhow to advantage; and the general rule has, in this play, moſt certainly not been departed from. It is obſerved by Dr. Johnſon, that as "occaſional poetry muſt content itſelf with occaſional praiſe, Tamerlane has for a long time been only acted once a-year, on the night when King William landed. Our quarrel with Louis has been long over; and it now gratifies neither zeal nor malice, to ſee him painted with aggravated features, like a Saracen upon a ſign."

Since Mr Kemble has choſen to revive this play, (although I think it might have been juſt as well to have allowed it to ſhare the fate of ſuch kind of performances, and to ſleep in quiet with its author), ſtill I ſee no good right he has to change its title to Tamerlane "THE GREAT;" or, if he muſt have a GREAT, I could have wiſhed

he had called it BAJAZET the GREAT; *1ſt*, Becauſe Louis actually acquired that appellation, (it is none of my buſineſs to enquire why?) *2dly*, Becauſe ſo *great* a man as Mr Kemble himſelf was to perform it.

King William's admirers have reaſon to thank Rowe for the picture of their hero in the perſon of Tamerlane, which was performed by Mr Woods—That he underſtood his author, and that he ſpoke the part with much perſpicuity, and the ſtricteſt propriety, gives me pleaſure to admit; but he certainly wants the dignified deportment of an emperor and a conqueror; and he was tame in the part beyond what I expected from his abilities.

If Mr Woods was too tame, Mr Kem-

ble in BAJAZET was too fierce.—The Sabine wolf—

> Quale portentum, neque militaris
> Daunia in latis alit Eſculetis,
> Nec Jubæ tellus generat.

was yet a ſpaniel in compariſon.—" Oh! " it offends me to the ſoul, to hear a ro- " buſtious fellow tear a paſſion to tatters--- " to very rags---to ſplit the ears of the " groundlings." His only merit was in the laſt ſcene with SELIMA. There he ſhowed ſome little variety of acting; but as moſt things he takes in hand ſeem by Fate ordained to turn him into ridicule, the ugly tumble he got at the end of it, rouſed the latent ſpark of mirth, and neither his chains nor misfortunes could reſtrain it.

MONESES, from the ſituations into which he is thrown, requires, if not a capital,

at leaſt a good performer. He is an unfortunate prince, and an unfortunate lover; and Mr Siddons, in performing the part, was, if poſſible, ſtill more unfortunate. If this gentleman has a real friend, he ſhould teach him, that the *name* of Siddons *alone* will not carry him through;—he ſhould adviſe him to quit a profeſſion for which, if I may judge from the ſpecimens he has exhibited, he appears to be totally unqualified,

"And court his fortune where ſhe may prove
"kinder."

Arpasia forces ſympathy and tears from an audience, while her ſpirit and conſtancy is pleaſing. Miſs Gough looked, ſpoke, and felt the character. It is in this line of acting ſhe will excel, and to it I ſincerely recommend her to confine herſelf.

SELIMA had a good repreſentative in Mrs Kemble. This lady, in her proper caſt, is an admirable actreſs; and, even in general acting, though not adapted to every part, ſhe rarely ſinks to mediocrity, and, in my opinion, never below it.

I ſtaid the afterpiece, which was the AGREEABLE SURPRISE. The ſettled grin continually on Scriven's face, unfits him altogether for the laughable gravity of LINGO. O'Keeffe never meant Lingo for a chattering, ſmirking booby; but for a ſelf-conceited, ignorant, aſſuming pedant. A good performer may make a great deal of the part; but Mr Scriven neither did nor can make any thing of it. In the ſongs, he had neither the words nor the muſic.--- In the proſaic part the audience were more diſpoſed to approve, where it is ſaid, "He

" is the moſt impudent *canis* in our *do-*
" *mus.*"---I am, &c.

EDIN. Feb. 16, 1797. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

TANCRED AND SIGISMUNDA.

SIR,

TANCRED AND SIGISMUNDA, which was the play of laſt night, is, in my opinion, well adapted for the ſtage, becauſe it certainly affords ample ſcope for the powers of an actor. I don't mean here to inquire into the real merits of the play; whether it is ſtrictly dramatical, or not; whether the plot is probable or improbable; or, whether the language is too pompoſe or too homely; but, as the paſſions of love and tenderneſs, and the oppoſite extremes of haughtineſs and rage, may be exhibited

in the moſt lively colours, it muſt deeply affect the minds of an audience.

Unfortunately, the two parts which require the greateſt powers, were perſonated by Siddons and Bew, whoſe performance took away every effect from the correct acting of Mr Woods, and the impreſſive manner of Mrs Kemble. It was, upon the whole, ſuch a jumble of good and bad acting, partaking ſo much of the ſolemn, and of the ridiculous, that it was more like a ſatire upon ſtage repreſentation, than a ſerious performance.

Tancred is a young prince, poſſeſſed of amiable diſpoſitions, with violent paſſions, and extreme ſenſibility. As theſe are violently expreſſed, it becomes a difficult part to perform, and requires great ſkill. To exhibit the character in a pro-

per manner, requires ſtrong powers in the actor, and, at the ſame time, ſuch a command of them, as not to degenerate into ranting.

Thomſon certainly had not a Mr Siddons in view, when he painted TANCRED as poſſeſſed of

——"theſe finer feelings that ne'er vex
"The common maſs of mortals."——

his nature does not ſeem to be of that texture—he rather appears to be

——"dully happy
"In bleſt inſenſibility,"——

and one of thoſe ſent into the world,

"To hatch a new Saturnian age of Lead."

He endeavoured to get the better of his natural dullneſs; but, in the attempt, he only ſucceeded, ſo far as to break out into the moſt violent rhapſodies; and no ſoon-

er had he finiſhed a ſpeech, than, "forget-
"ting the cunning of the ſcene," he ſunk back into *himſelf;* when his only care was, to regain a *neat poſture*, in which he ſtood motionleſs, with a vacant ſtare, till it was his turn again to

"Strike the general ear with *horrid* ſpeech."

—in vain I looked for the

——"all accompliſhed youth,"

deſcribed by Sigiſmunda!

If this young man is determined, *invita Minerva*, to be a player, I ſhould wiſh to ſee him try the line of *walking gentlemen*. I think he might paſs in theſe.

SIFFREDI is a cool, ſedate, and what is very rarely to be found, a diſintereſted politician.—The part requires no great powers, but correctneſs and propriety of utterance. Mr Woods went through it exceed-

ingly well,—he was neither too cool nor too violent.

Earl Osmond was "ſupremely vile" in the perſon of Mr Bew.

Sigismunda requires gentleneſs and ſoftneſs, which is Mrs Kemble's *forte*, and ſhe certainly was not deficient laſt night—Indeed I never ſaw her in a part which fitted her better than Sigiſmunda; but in the ſcene where ſhe reviles Tancred, I would adviſe her to keep in future rather cooler, becauſe *ſtage* violence does not become her,—ſhe *ſqualled* thro' that ſcene.

I am, &c.

Edin. Feb. 21, 1797. Timothy Plain.

ROMEO AND JULIET.

SIR,

I WENT laſt night to ſee ROMEO and JULIET, in which a Miſs Miller was announced for JULIET. This play, which points out the diſaſtrous conſequences of family feuds, has many poetical beauties, expreſſed in ſmooth, nervous verſification; and, in ſeveral places, takes tender poſſeſſion of the paſſions; riſes, by juſt degrees, to a ſtriking cataſtrophe, and pleaſes either on the ſtage or in the cloſet.

ROMEO, the hero of the piece, has warm paſſions, is an ardent lover, and, what is a natural conſequence, has little prudence. He however poſſeſſes the virtues of perſonal courage, conſtancy in love, and ſteadineſs in friendſhip; and the part affords an

actor of talents a fine opportunity of diſplaying them. The garden ſcene, in the 2d Act, is perhaps the moſt beautiful love ſcene that ever was written.—The ſpeech, on hearing Juliet's voice, beginning,

——————" She ſpeaks;
" Oh! ſpeak again, bright angel! for thou art
" As glorious to this ſight, being o'er my head,
" As is a winged meſſenger from Heav'n."

is energy and rapture itſelf. And the ſcene with the Friar, before Romeo flies to Mantua, is ſo expreſſive of horror and deſpair, as muſt ever produce a moſt powerful effect when repreſented by an actor who can decently feel, and decently ſpeak it,---a good actor might " harrow up the ſouls" of an audience in it.

To attempt to deſcribe all the beauties of the part, would be as tedious and difficult as to deſcribe the imperfections of

Mr Siddons in performing it; which I would not deſcend to do.—There can be no criticiſm where there is not ſome merit. Poor and degraded indeed muſt that ſtage be, when the repreſentative of a Romeo is aukward in deportment, wanting in animation, his action neither "ſuited to the "words" nor his "words to the action;" and who, without one requiſite for the part, buſtles through it with the moſt inſufferable monotony. The perſon of Mr Siddons, although by no means good, is the beſt thing about him.

The peculiarities of ſtile, the oddities of expreſſion, and general eccentricity of MERCUTIO, would require more vivacity than Mr Woods is poſſeſſed of. It is no way derogatory to this gentleman's merit in the moſt of the characters he plays, to ſay, that he is not entitled to any praiſe in

the part of Mercutio.—I think that if he eſcapes cenſure he is very well off; for human nature is ſo bounded, that the man who is qualified for Glenalvon or Iago, is very rarely fitted for the lively Mercutio,—lively, ſprightly, and witty even in dying. The genius of Shakeſpeare *itſelf* was bounded, if we may truſt tradition, which ſays, that he was obliged to kill Mercutio in the 3d Act, to avoid being killed by him before the end of the play.

Shakeſpeare has taken unuſual pains with JULIET, when compared with the moſt of his females. She is an amiable character; tender, affectionate, and conſtant, though romantic in ſome of her notions of love; but pardonably ſo from her age and ſituation.—The young lady who performed the part, laboured under the natural embarraſſment which attends every appear-

ance in public, till overcome by cuſtom and practice.—Her timidity was much againſt her in the garden ſcene of the 2d Act; but in that ſcene where the nurſe informs her of Tibalt's death by the hands of Romeo, her action and utterance improved wonderfully, and ſhe repeated ſome lines with peculiar energy and force of expreſſion.—With care and practice, ſhe may lay ſome claim to certain parts in this line of acting. Her perſon is agreeable enough, though ſmall,—her voice is harmonious, and her countenance tolerably expreſſive.

Mrs Walcot played the nurſe exceedingly well.—It is not her fault that this goſſiping part takes away from the general effect of the Tragedy.—I am, &c.

Edin. Feb. 24. 1797. Timothy Plain.

FASHIONABLE LOVER.

SIR,

THE FASHIONABLE LOVER is, without doubt, one of Cumberland's beſt Comedies. It is not, like ſome very faſhionable pieces, founded on the cant phraſe of the day; but being a picture of life drawn from nature, it will hold its place on the ſtage, while the audience continues to reliſh the works of taſte and genius.

The ſtory is extremely intereſting. Unſuſpecting honour and confidence are repaid by ſelfiſhneſs and ingratitude; but the *denouement*, as always ſhould be the caſe, brings on the dreadful day of reckoning and retribution, when juſtice triumphs over pride and oppreſſion: and what honeſt heart can fail to rejoice in

ſuch a triumph? If I were to object to any thing in this play, it would be to the *name* of it; becauſe I hope Lord ABERVILLE is not a *faſhionable lover;* nay, I hope that it never was, nor ever will be faſhionable in Great Britain, to attempt the ſeduction of ſuffering innocence; at leaſt it is in my mind

——————————" a cuſtom
" More honour'd in the breach than the obſerv-
" ance."

The parts of AUBREY by Mr Kemble, and of Miſs AUBREY by Miſs Gough, were both extremely well performed. Aubrey is one of thoſe characters for which Mr Kemble ſeems exactly ſuited,—his countenance, voice, and manner, while they unite to qualify him for buſineſs in this caſt, totally diſqualify him for parts of an oppoſite nature, which, if he ſtudied either the gratifi-

cation of the public, or his own reputation, he would entirely renounce. I ſaw him throughout with much ſatisfaction, and I am glad of the opportunity of beſtowing praiſe where it is due, becauſe it gives me pleaſure to point out merit, and only pain to expoſe blemiſhes, but which the preſent company too often oblige me to do.

Of Miſs Gough in Miſs AUBREY, I need ſay nothing, having already more than once applauded her, both in tragedy, and in ſentimental comedy, its twin ſiſter. But, of her lovers, I am obliged in truth to ſay---

" A ſtupid roaring pair they are;
" Fit only for themſelves, they herd together."

Melvin, in Lord ABERVILLE, was truly diſguſting. The libertine, and the penitent, were repreſented by the ſame ſtarch-

ed gait, aukward ſtrut, and uniformity of feature, which pronounces, in Nature's ſtrongeſt language, a total want of feeling. His rival, Mr Siddons, was as unfit for TYRELL, though his faults are of a kind quite different. I ſcarcely think any ſalary an adequate recompence for the waſte of lungs which this gentleman ſquanders away, every night, to ſo little purpoſe.

BRIDGEMORE was very pooly repreſented by Mr Creſwell. By the way, I can neither ſee neceſſity nor propriety in repreſenting every citizen of London with a pillow under his waiſtcoat; nay, of doing ſo at the hazard of being ridiculous, which muſt be the caſe, when the man's lantern jaws proclaim the deception. Bridgemore is, beſides, a moſt ungrateful villain; and Shakeſpeare ſeems to have thought corpulency an inſeparable attendant of *honeſty:*

——" I like not that *ſpare* Caſſius.
" Let me have men about me that are *fat*;
" Sleek-headed men, and ſuch as ſleep a-night;
" Yon Caſſius hath a lean and hungry look;
" He reads much; he is a great obſerver;
" And he ſees quite through the deeds of men.
" Seldom he ſmiles, and ſmiles in ſuch a ſort,
" As if he mock'd himſelf, and ſcorn'd his ſpirit,
" That could be mov'd to ſmile at any thing.—
" Such men be ever dangerous."

But, perhaps, Mr Creſwell did this to fill up the *ſtock* waiſtcoat. If ſo, it was pardonable.

As Mr Ryley made an apology in the bills for attempting to ſpeak in the native dialect of the character, it would be uncandid to ſay more, than that the apology was prudent and ſeaſonable. There was leſs occaſion, though there would have been no impropriety in his deprecating alſo the ſeverity of criticiſm on the mode of

his *acting* a Scotſman. Speaking in a certain dialect is a talent to be acquired; and tho' it may be obſerved, in general, that *acting* is the inherent gift of nature, yet length of time, accurate obſervation, and ſtubborn induſtry, are requiſite to enable the actor to aſſume the appropriate manner, faſhion, and peculiar character of the part we are ſpeaking of, in ſuch perfection as to give it the appearance of being borne eaſily by him.—I am, &c.

EDIN. Feb. 28, 1797. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

SIR,

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE is a play ſo univerſally known to every admirer of Shakeſpeare, and to every frequenter of the theatre, that it would be waſting time

to ſay much about it. It is a ſtriking proof of the boundleſs genius of its author, who could thus, by ſentiment, expreſſion, and marked character, ſo eminently intereſt our paſſions, and rivet attention to a ſtory in itſelf ſo out of nature, that in any other hands it muſt have been ridiculous and inſufferable.

SHYLOCK, I hope, for the honour of the human ſpecies, is a character which never exiſted in Jew, Chriſtian, or Pagan,--- all ſhade, all darkneſs, and not one gleam of light; *nulla virtute redeunte a vitiis.*— Shakeſpeare has nevertheleſs drawn the picture; but Fielding has diſputed the exiſtence of ſuch a character; and as it falls upon the *philanthropiſt* and *miſanthropiſt* to ſettle the queſtion, who, I don't ſuppoſe, will be in a hurry in agreeing about it, I fancy it will remain unſettled to the end of the world.

Shylock, being ſo very unlike any other dramatic perſonage, the mode of repreſenting him ought to be peculiar to himſelf. Almoſt any figure or features may, with a little aſſiſtance from art, be rendered ſuitable; but the cautious miſer, whoſe only paſſions are avarice, deep-rooted hatred, and inſatiable revenge, requires a ſullen gloomineſs of deportment, a rancorous yet forcible expreſſion, for which Mr Kemble is quite unqualified. In the ſcene in the 3d Act, where diſtraction, grief, and exulting malevolence, ſucceed and croſs each other, and where, of courſe, theſe paſſions ought to reign alternately, Mr Kemble either growled on in the ſame unvaried tone of utterance, or, attempting to riſe above himſelf,

"Scream'd like the winding of ten thouſand
"jacks."

Oh! if Mr Kemble was to ſee any other manager put ſuch an actor on for Shylock, how eaſily would he diſcover the egregious error of his brother *potentate*, and the folly of human vanity, which ſhuts our eyes againſt our own imperfections:

" But man, proud man, dreſt in a little brief au-
" thority,
" Plays ſuch fantaſtic tricks before high Heav'n,
" As make even angels weep."———

Ordinary abilities only are required for the MERCHANT. Mr Woods ſpoke and looked the part with judgment and propriety, diſplaying throughout that ſmoothneſs and elegant placidity with which ANTHONIO is drawn.

BASSANIO, by Mr Siddons.
GRATIANO, by Mr Melvin.

" I had as lief the town-crier had ſpoke my lines."

PORTIA is a moſt agreeable character, and the actreſs who perſonates her muſt poſſeſs ſuperior abilities. Mrs Kemble, tho' rather *petite* in figure, has ſeldom appeared to more advantage than in Portia. She has "that ſweetneſs in diſcourſe" ſo characteriſtic of the part. Her deportment was graceful and eaſy.—She had the neceſſary archneſs for the firſt ſcene, and the anxiety which attends Baſſanio's choice of the caſkets was finely expreſſed. In the trial ſcene, and particularly in that ſpeech where mercy is ſo beautifully defined and inculcated, ſhe was moſt excellent.

I am ſorry, Mr Editor, that my frequent viſits to the Theatre, and which have now made me tolerably familiar with this company of players, lay me under the neceſſity of making a remark not highly to the credit of my fellow citizens. There was a

time when the Edinburgh audience ſaw every performer of merit in the three kingdoms; and that not for a race week, as an object of "wonder and ſurprize," but for the ſeaſon. We had, for years, a company not unfit for the boards of London, with a band of muſic, which, both in number and merit, could be rarely equalled; and we ſtill remember, with mixed pleaſure and regret, the time, now, tho' not very long paſt, when an evening ſpent at the Theatre was really an exquiſite entertainment.

Accidental circumſtances brought about a change:

"Omne ignotum pro magnifico habetur;"

and, like giddy children, the town welcomed this change. Mark the conſequence! We are now become one of the towns that ſupport a troop of ſtrollers, compoſed of

the moſt inſufferable boobies: our band is, by the ſame indecent parſimony, reduced to ſeven miſerable ſcrapers; and yet we are told in the bills, to apply early for places at the box-office, that the Manager may know how much of the *pit* muſt be railed in, to accommodate the people of *ton*, and exclude the *canaille*. How ſtriking is the contraſt between what is, and what has been!—We muſt ſay,

" Happier thy fortunes! like a rolling ſtone,
" Thy giddy dulneſs ſtill ſhall lumber on;
" Safe in its heavineſs, ſhall never ſtray,
" But lick up every blockhead in the way:
" Thee ſhall the Patriot, thee the Courtier taſte,
" And every year be duller than the laſt."

Formerly, though we uſed only to have occaſionally a play beſpoke by a public body, or a " perſon of diſtinction," but now, in imitation of the reſt of the *provin-*

cial towns which compoſe the *circuit*, we have a *beſpeak* almoſt every night: ſtrangers muſt from this think poorly of the judgment and taſte of the *beſpeakers*, unleſs they attribute it to what I do, the importunity of the Manager.—I am, &c.

EDIN. Mar. 9. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

DOUGLAS.

SIR,

DOUGLAS is a tragedy, which is, and always has been, a favourite, particularly in Scotland; for, altho' the heroic achievments of the Douglas and the Percy have long ceaſed to exiſt, ſtill there remains a ſtrong prepoſſeſſion that always attends the *Name* which has diſtinguiſhed a line of brave and enterpriſing ſpirits. The piece has, beſides, much intrinſic merit. The plot is ſimple

and regular, and the poetry often riſes to the ſublime; the characters, indeed, are few, and the ſcenes long, without much variety of incident; there is alſo a ſuperfluity of deſcription; and, in the hands of ordinary actors, it muſt ever be rather a a heavy play. We may, upon the whole, pronounce it not only a well written, but a moral and inſtructive dramatic poem; and the perſecution which this play, and its reverend and moſt ingenious author underwent, at its firſt repreſentation in this city, is one of the many proofs of the hatred which Bigotry and Ignorance entertain againſt Taſte and Genius. The triumph of Mr Home over his narrow-minded enemies, who wiſhed to confine religion to auſterity of features, formality of ſpeech, and a total abſtraction from every innocent relaxation of the mind, gave an irrecoverable blow to the ſyſtem of gloom and hor-

ror in worſhipping the Deity; and, we have happily lived to ſee even dramatic poetry tried by another clergyman, without any riſk of church cenſure.

Lord RANDOLPH is a lover of his country, a friend to merit, and, as far as his lady's coldneſs will admit, a tender huſband; but, excepting the jealouſy in the 4th act, and the circumſtances of the laſt ſcene, the character is made up of unimportant declamation. Mr Kemble, I preſume, thought the part required no abilities to perform it; and, as it would have been contradicting a Chriſtian precept, to "caſt pearls before ſwine," he put it into the hands of Mr Creſwell, who, in the lover and the warrior, was aukwardneſs perſonified,

"The ſtain (indeed) of knighthood and of arms."

Douglas is the hero of the piece. His ſtory is pathetic; his ardent love of fame in the path of glory, is peculiarly the delight of youth, while his ſituation, and filial ſentiments, endear him equally to the gentler ſex; and his fall, never will fail to call forth

"The tear that ſacred pity hath engendered."

There cannot poſſibly be an excuſe for attempting to perform any piece *here*, without an actor capable of doing ſome juſtice to the Principal Character. I appeal to the whole audience; to the reiterated *hiſſes* which cloſed the buſineſs; to every ſpectator who has ſeen Mr Siddons in any part whatever; and I only deſire to know why, with ſuch a Douglas, the play was preſented to the public? In his quarrel ſcene with Glenalvon, "the blood of Douglas," in the veins of Siddons, ſunk to nothing. In

his account of himſelf, inſtead of a tale "with gallant modeſty rehearſed," we were thunder-ſtruck with aſſuming petulance and noiſe, as diſcordant,

"As when the long-ear'd milky mothers wait
"At ſome ſick miſer's triple bolted gate;
"For their defrauded abſent foals, they make
"A moan ſo loud, that all the guild awake——
"So ſwells *his* windpipe."——

GLENALVON is a picture of deformed human nature, capable of the baſeſt actions, for the gratification of his own paſſions. The part requires a good performer. Mr Woods' capacity is univerſally allowed to ſuit this character. He looks "yon falſe Glenalvon" well, and ſpeaks him with great force and propriety. He makes more of the ſoliloquies than any performer I have ſeen, and he met with much well merited applauſe from every quarter of the houſe.

Old NORVAL's ſimplicity and fidelity engage us deeply in his favour. Mr Kemble in the part, was mechanical and laborious; his ſimplicity and grief were ill put on.

Had Mr Kemble been playing the part, after the manner of the Ancients, in dumb ſhow, with a perſon behind the ſcenes reciting the words, a ſpectator who did not hear them, would, in his deſcription of ſaving Norval from the flood, have been ſtruck with the idea of our old friend Webb in Bonniface, "I eat my ale, I "drink my ale, I ſleep upon my ale." &c.

Lady RANDOLPH is a moſt intereſting dramatic perſonage, and the ſituation ſhe is thrown into can never fail to melt the hardeſt heart. It is admirably deſcribed in the following beautiful lines:

——————"A little while

" Was I a Wife! a Mother not ſo long!
" What am I now?—I know.—But I ſhall be
" That, only whilſt I pleaſe; for ſuch a Son,
" And ſuch a Huſband, drive me to my fate!"

Miſs Gough did the part great juſtice, and the general applauſe beſtowed on her, was moſt deſervedly due. She was affecting, correct, and characteriſtic in the whole part. I am, &c.

EDIN. Mar. 24. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

BOLD STROKE FOR A WIFE---HAMLET.

SIR,

I HAVE not troubled you with any obſervation on the performances at our Theatre for ſome time paſt, becauſe I could ſcarcely find myſelf in a humour to write,

or ſuppoſe my countrymen much inclined to read ſuch trifling articles, when every poſt was preſenting us with the alarming ſituation of public affairs. The ſame reaſon for my declining to intrude, I am ſorry to ſay, ſtill continues, and, therefore, I only mean at preſent to offer you two or three remarks on the acting of Mr Banniſter, junior.

I have ſeen this gentleman in moſt of his parts during this laſt fortnight, but I cannot ſay whether it was owing to the overſtrained puffs of Mr Kemble in his advertiſements, or to any fond hopes of meeting with a ſecond KING in Colonel FEIGNWELL, (one or other of which reaſons had raiſed my expectations too much), that I felt diſappointed the very firſt night. I readily admit, that Feignwell is a part which requires very great powers in an actor. It

would be an uncommon exertion indeed in common life, were any man to aſſume alternately the character of Beau, Virtuoſo, Quaker, Old Steward, and Phlegmatic Dutchman, and do juſtice to all, when in reality, he was none of them. This may reaſonably account for the very few actors who are paſſable in the part; but it cannot excuſe that ſelf-ſufficiency which we daily meet with in attempting a taſk ſo difficult. I have no doubt that the imitation of the Old Steward alone, was the ſcene on which Mr Banniſter founded his claim to the character, altho' even this was overdone. But tho' I allow him to have merit there, I have not the ſmalleſt heſitation to declare in general, that he truſts much more to the effect of little ſtage trick, than to the genuine traits of Nature, or even to thoſe powers he himſelf poſſeſſes. Were I to apply this remark, by enumerating the

many groſs faults, and ſome as ſtriking excellencies, which I have obſerved in Mr Banniſter, I am afraid I would much exceed the bounds you can afford me. I do not at all mean to ſay, that he is unable to play any part well; on the contrary, I think that he is poſſeſſed of conſiderable powers, but that theſe powers are limited to a certain line of buſineſs. For example, Braſs, in the Confederacy, ſeems to be a part well ſuited to Mr Banniſter; and I ſhould be inclined to think that the Lying Valet would likewiſe ſuit him well, and many parts in that ſtile; but, for him to lay claim to the character of a *general* Actor, ſeems to me abſurd.

I ſhall now offer a few obſervations on his performance in Tragedy.

I believe no play, written by the immor-

tal Bard, ever underwent ſo many criti-ciſms as *Hamlet*. Speaking of this play, Dr. Johnſon expreſſes himſelf thus: "The "poet is accuſed of having paid little re-"gard to poetical juſtice, and may be "charged with equal neglect of poetical "probability. The apparition left the re-"gions of the dead to little purpoſe; the "revenge which he demands is not ob-"tained but by the death of him that was "required to take it; and the gratification "which would ariſe from the deſtruction "of an uſurper and a murderer, is abated "by the untimely death of Ophelia, the "young and beautiful, the harmleſs and "the pious." HAMLET himſelf is an ami-able character, though, in many reſpects, inconſiſtent. Philoſophic in reaſoning, but impetuous in his paſſions; ſenſible of injury, but timid in reſentment; full of filial piety, yet tame under oppreſſion;—never-

theleſs, as the part is pregnant with variety, from affording many opportunities to exert ſound judgment, and extenſive powers, Hamlet is as agreeable and ſtriking a perſonage as any in the drama. Mr Banniſter has now been long on the ſtage, and has had many opportunities of ſeeing this character repreſented to the beſt advantage; even Garrick himſelf trod the boards after this gentleman was a candidate for theatrical fame; ſo that it was impoſſible he could be a diſagreeable Hamlet, eſpecially when we recollect his known talent for imitation; but he was by no means the young Dane drawn by Shakeſpeare. He look'd the part well I admit;—his eye, which is ſmart and lively at any time, aſſiſted him in the ſcenes with the Ghoſt, and his voice, from borrowed notes, was tolerably characteriſtic. His action was agreeable enough; but, in the moſt affect-

ing ſcenes, he was ſo bent upon *copy*, that he forgot the meaning of the words he uttered.—Thus, ſpeaking to Horatio of his mother's wedding, he expreſſed theſe lines,

" Thriſt, thrift, Horatio!
" The funeral *bak'd* meats
" Did coldly furniſh forth the marriage table."

Speaking of his mother's affected fondneſs for his father, he ſaid,

" ——— Why, ſhe would hang on him,
" As if *increaſe* of appetite had grown
" By what it fed on."

And, when requeſting Horatio to obſerve the King's looks and behaviour during the play, he added,

" For *I*, *mine eyes* will rivet to his face."

The error in pronouncing theſe three paſſages improperly (and many more might be mentioned) from wrong emphaſis, is manifeſt, but can only be placed to this fault, that as Mr Banniſter's mind was ab-

ſorbed in recollecting the gait and manner of the actors he was imitating, he loſt ſight of

"The very end and purpoſe of playing."

His copies were pretty well hit off, as to thoſe performers I remember, and I could point them out; but that is foreign to my purpoſe.—He was very unintereſting in the celebrated ſpeech, "To be, or not to "be?" He miſtook the author's intention in the ſcene with Ophelia; for, through the whole of it, he was ſeemingly an enraged Prince, ready to knock the poor girl down, inſtead of being mad "by loſing his "wits." He had conſiderable merit in his utterance of the ſententious remarks during the *play;* but this, and the method he takes of getting quit of the Court Butterflies ſet on him by the King, by aſking them to play on a pipe, were his beſt ſcenes.

I commend him much for " the modeſty of nature" in *omitting* the inſtructions to the players—the word and the action were indeed not made to ſuit each other; but why he ſhould have omitted tracing " the noble duſt of Alexander 'till he " found it ſtopping a bung-hole," is inconceivable. He ſeemed tolerably apt to declaim; and the jingle at the end of that ſpeech might have ſet off the ſcene (which heaven knows was *heavy enough*) " *trippingly* from the tongue."

Upon the whole, if I miſtake not, Mr Banniſter will never gain a name in the *buſkin*, though he may paſs very well as a ſmart Comedian. Even Garrick's tutelage could not ſupport him in Zophna: Neither will an attempt to copy the Garricks of the preſent day carry him thro' Hamlet.

The reſt of the troop, I am ſure (even Mr Scriven himſelf), will forgive my ſilence on their performances in Tragedy.—The worſt I ſhall ſay of them is, that I wiſh they may *improve*.

This being my laſt letter for the ſeaſon, I I cannot entirely omit Mr Kemble. *Doubling* parts is bad, but I never till now ſaw them *tripled*.—Poor Hallion (even with a lame foot) had three parts in Hamlet.—I by no means, however, blame Mr Kemble for enriching himſelf by making dupes of the Edinburgh audience, as long as they themſelves permit it. For,

——"Since the world *will*,
"Why, let them be deceiv'd.

I am, yours, &c.

TIMOTHY PLAIN.

DOUGLAS.

SIR,

DURING the courſe of laſt winter, I occaſionally gave you ſuch remarks as occurred to me upon our theatrical entertainments, which, whatever might be their merit, it certainly will be allowed were not compoſed of either indiſcriminate cenſure or applauſe upon the acting of *any particular play*, but were given in a plain honeſt ſtile, ſuch as appeared to me to be conſiſtent with the truth, and ſuited to the merits of the performance. With regard to the *general* management of Mr Kemble, and his treatment of the public, I am free to admit that I reprobated it in the ſtrongeſt terms; becauſe I thought, and I am ſure that every perſon who has paid attention to the theatre for theſe twenty years

paſt did think with me, that it never was upon ſo degraded a footing as under his direction.

We had, for ſome weeks before the opening of the theatre for the preſent ſeaſon, a liſt of the performers puffed away in ſeveral of the newſpapers, four of whom are announced as from "the Theatre-roy-"al Drury Lane.—Mr Kemble, however, ſhould keep in view, that an actor muſt have ſomething elſe to recommend him than merely coming from either Drury Lane or the theatre at Calcutta.

I admit, that with Lee Lewes, Woods, Rock, Scriven, Miſs Gough, and Mrs Kemble, a certain run of comedies may be performed in a very reſpectable manner; but, I aſk, what tragedy, except in the fe-

male characters, can be repreſented with the ſmalleſt degree of decency?

I went, however, upon Saturday laſt, to ſee the play of DOUGLAS, which is ſo deſervedly a favourite with the public; and as I have formerly made my obſervations upon it in your paper, I need not reſume them—ſuffice it to ſay, that many circumſtances combine to render it an agreeable piece.

I have already admitted the merits of Miſs Gough and Mr Woods, in the characters of Lady RANDOLPH and GLENALVON, and I ſhall only ſay in addition, that their performance upon Saturday evening well deſerves every praiſe that can be beſtowed on them.

I believe that I ought to paſs over Mr

Bew, in RANDOLPH, becauſe, where there is no ſoil there can be no produce; and the gentleman ought alſo to recollect, that his defect of ſpeech muſt ever mar his performance in tragedy.

The part of DOUGLAS was filled up by Mr Campbell, who is one of thoſe that are ſaid to be from "the Theatre Royal, "Drury Lane," and therefore I muſt be more minute as to him. I have witneſſed many attempts to make ſomething of this character; but, Mr Siddons excepted, I have never met with any thing on the ſtage that tortured both my eyes and ears ſo much as Mr Campbell's Young Norval—his figure is neither manly nor genteel—there is nothing meaning in his countenance, and his voice is made hoarſe by attempts at imitation—his conception of the character is erroneous in many places, par-

ticularly in his firſt ſcene;—that in which Lady Randolph diſcovers to him his birth;—and in the ſhort ſoliloquy, beginning of the laſt act. When he deſcribed who he was, he would have drawn as much attention in ſaying,

" For us, and for our tragedy,
" Here ſtooping to your clemency,
" We beg your hearing patiently."

—Inſtead of that ſmooth and mellow manner ſo obviouſly requiſite in the celebrated ſpeech of " My name is Norval," &c. he bellowed it forth as if he had been roaring " Richard is hoarſe with daring thee to " arms."—His quarrel with Glenalvon, his blubbering in the laſt ſcene, and his *tout enſemble* was *outré*, unſuitable to the part, and unlike any thing but itſelf.

The contraſt between the mother and the ſon was indeed ſtriking;—the one

was all that could engage the attention, and arouſe the feelings—the other was inanimity itſelf.

Old NORVAL, Mr Denman.—In the hands even of a decent performer, this part muſt always be intereſting, and of much conſequence in the piece—On Saturday, it paſſed over almoſt as much unnoticed as the officer who announces that the banquet waits.

So much for two of our new performers "from the Theatre Royal, Drury-lane!!!"—--I have known ſcene-ſhifters come from that theatre.

Why did not Mrs Woods play ANNA? —Miſs Kemble's *appearance* in the part put me in mind of a good, fat, well-dreſſed cook:—but

" Her *youth*, her *beauty*,
" Cannot be queſtioned; think of *theſe* good gifts,
" And *then* her contemplations will be pleaſing."

The omitting of Old NORVAL's laſt ſcene ſhows a total want of knowledge of the drama, as it ſpoils the unity of both time and place.

The Farce was CATHERINE and PETRUCHIO.---Woods buſtled through PETRUCHIO with as much ſpirit and propriety as it would admit of.

Miſs Kemble, in CATHERINE, was indeed the " plain Kate;"---ſhe, however, could repeat the words.

The Prompter ſpoke the part of BAPTISTO.—I am, Sir, yours, &c.

Tueſday 16th Jan. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL.

SIR,

IT is much to be regretted that Mr. Sheridan has given the world ſo few of his dramatic compoſitions:——thoſe he has brought forward are excellent, and none better, or perhaps equal, to the SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL. Every character and incident in it are familiar to the public, and it is univerſally allowed to be a pleaſant, inſtructive, and moral eſſay, whether read in the cloſet, or ſeen upon the ſtage.

Mr Lee-Lewes made his firſt appearance in this city for theſe three years in the character of SIR PETER TEAZLE. It muſt be allowed that this performer has great variety in his acting, and in Sir Peter he

came nearer the idea of the character which I have, than any other perſon I have ſeen in the part, Mr King excepted.—He kept clear of buffoonery—he was very little beholden to ſtage trick for applauſe, which I have ſeen many Sir Peters have recourſe to, particularly in the ſcreen ſcene—he ſeemed to feel as well as ſpeak the part—his pathetic delivery when telling Joſeph how he had ſettled his affairs, his expreſſive countenance when the ſcreen fell, and his manner of interrupting Joſeph when attempting to explain his conduct, were evident proofs of a juſt conception of his author.

CHARLES is a pleaſing volatile young rake, poſſeſſing, however, a benevolent heart; but though his ſituations are well diſpoſed, in ſo far as that the part in a great meaſure ſupports itſelf, ſtill it could not have been

more unhappily placed than in the hands of Mr Campbell.—Eaſe or elegance he has none—his deportment is vulgar—and his rolling about the ſtage, in the picture-ſcene, was more fit for Ben Block, than the gay ſprightly Charles Surface.—As to the fair ſex, I have no doubt that rather than make *ſuch* a Charles bleſſed

" They'd die virgins,
" And ſtop the propagation of mankind."

The hypocriſy and deſigning knavery of JOSEPH is upon the whole well depicted by Mr. Woods, yet I don't think that he ought to be ſo *very* ſullen in his gait *throughout* the piece—neither do I think that there is any propriety in dreſſing the part in the ſtile of a college pedant, as Mr Woods did upon Saturday.

Melvin and Scriven, I have no doubt,

" made the beſt report *they could*" in Sir BENJAMIN and CRABTREE, but their performance was indeed " a ſorry ſight! '

Denman ſpoke Sir OLIVER better than I expected.

Mr Rock's features in MOSES ſeemed immoveable, although in the picture-ſcene he cauſed ſome laughter.

I was ſorry to hear that Mrs Kemble had been ailing.—She is always moſt deſervedly welcomed on this ſtage; but candour obliges me to ſay, that was ſhe ever ſo well, ſhe is not the Lady TEAZLE we have a right to ſee—her *forte* lies in the *ſerious*, and conſequently the volubility and ſprightlineſs of this theatrical perſonage can never be ſtriking in *her* hands.—In the ſcene where ſhe quarrels with her huſ-

band, after getting the 200 l. Lewes was obliged to make the quarrel *himſelf*, by *acting* for *both*.---She was likewiſe very bad in her attempts at imitation in Lady Sneerwell's rout; and, upon the whole, till *after* the diſcovery in Joſeph's library, the part is totally out of her line;----after *that* ſhe came upon her own ground, and ſpoke every word with the higheſt propriety.

Having thus, Mr Editor, commented upon the performance, I think that the public at large ought to be made acquainted with what paſſed during the courſe of it. I have often found fault with Mr Kemble's treatment of the audience in regard to performers, but what paſſed on Saturday, inclines me to think he entertains an abſolute contempt of them in every point of view.

It has long been an *eſtabliſhed rule* in this theatre, that *no perſon whatever* could be admitted behind the ſcenes; but on this occaſion, almoſt from the opening of the play, ſome perſons in the dreſs of officers, and others, conſtantly obtruded themſelves upon the ſtage:—This naturally produced clamour and diſturbance, but the calls of the audience were paid no attention to. At the beginning of the 5th act, one of the officers had the inſolence to come forward almoſt to the front of the ſtage, from whence he would not move; and after being tolerably well pelted with oranges, &c. he thought proper to return the compliment—nay, he even pulled down a couple of candles from one of the luſtres upon the ſtage, which, with their ſockets, he threw into the pit, by which a lady was ſeverely cut in the breaſt.

At laſt ſeveral gentlemen ſprung from the pit to the ſtage, upon which the officer was joined by his companions, but they were all ſoon turned off, and were ſeen no more during the courſe of the evening. This, however, did not end the matter; and the Manager, finding that the audience was not ſo eaſily to be pacified for the groſſeſt inſult that could be offered them, and the uproar becoming more violent, now made his appearance, accompanied by a gentleman, who, after having obtained a hearing, merely begged the performance might be allowed to go on, and aſſured the audience, on the part of the Manager, *that no ſuch thing ſhould happen in future.* Not one word from Mr Kemble himſelf! —Not a word for the *paſt!* not a ſyllable for infringing the moſt neceſſary eſtabliſhed rule in the theatre!—Notwithſtanding, however, the performance, after about ten

minutes further confuſion, was permitted to proceed.

Mr Editor, this buſineſs requires little comment, as its mere narrative is but too glaring. To the officers I ſay nothing; becauſe, ſince they were *allowed* to inſult the audience, I think they were very right in doing ſo. And indeed I would rather apologiſe for them, as I believe their conduct to have proceeded more from having never ſeen what an eſtabliſhed theatre is, and conſequent ignorance of its nature, than from any thing elſe---they ſurely muſt have been dreaming of *exploits* they had performed in ſome provincial playhouſe. The blame, I am ſorry to ſay, is attachable to Mr Kemble---*he* is the oſtenſible perſon---*he* gave occaſion for the inſult, by admitting the officers behind the ſcenes---*he* diſregarded the repeated calls

of the audience to have them removed---and, I ſhall only add in general, that, ſunk as the ſpirit of the country undoubtedly is, I could not have thought it was reduced to ſo low a ſtate as I muſt conſider it to be, if the Manager is not yet brought to a juſt, *immediate* account. Not many years ago the offenders would have felt different conſequences from ſuch an outrage of public decency.---I am, Sir, yours, &c.

Monday, 22d January. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

SIR,

WHILE Mr Kemble is puffing away his vaſt exertions, and an expence "far "exceeding," even upon a *moderate* calculation, any thing known in this country, to promote the theatrical entertainments of the city of Edinburgh; and while he is

talking of the "ſplendour" he is to exhibit, and *modeſtly* hinting at its being neceſſary to beſpeak places at the diſtance of *three weeks*, I ſhould think that the public muſt be pleaſed with ſeeing a comparative view between *his* management, and that of the *ten preceding years*, in what only can truly intereſt an audience, viz. The Selection of Performers.—Mr Kemble, I preſume, would not be fond of drawing the compariſon himſelf, and therefore I ſhall take the trouble of doing it for him. Your limits won't admit of giving full liſts of all the different Companies, but the leading names will not occupy a great deal of room.

Mr Kemble got into the management in 1792, and therefore I ſhall begin with the 1782, contraſting each year downwards.

In 1782, Mr Jackſon's company was

full and reſpectable, conſiſting of twenty-two Actors and thirteen Actreſſes.—The leading Performers were

Meſſrs. Woods,	Mrs Bulkely,
Ward,	Ward,
Johnſon, (Dick)	Jackſon,
Hollingſworth,	Charteris,
Gaudry,	Miſs Kirby,
Williamſon,	Capon.
Banks,	
J. Banks, (Harlequin)	
Leoni,	
Davies,	
Aldridge,	

In 1792, Mr Kemble's company was nearly as numerous, and the leading names were

Meſſrs. Woods,	Mrs Kemble,
Lee Lewes,	Lee Lewes,
Lamaſh,	Charteris,
	Stuart.

Mr Lee Lewes only came towards the

end of the ſeaſon, and all the reſt were compoſed of ſtrollers, whoſe names had never been heard of beyond the *ſable* circle of Newcaſtle, and who have long ſince ſunk back into their native obſcurity.

It is true that we had a peep at *John* Kemble and Mrs Siddons during the ſummer, but it is as true, that they were by this time no ſtrangers in Edinburgh, altho' I do not mean by this to derogate in the ſmalleſt degree, from the acknowledged merits of theſe Performers.

The Company of 1783, was equally reſpectable as that of the year preceding, with the addition of Ryder, Moſs, Mrs Baddely, and Mrs Cornely; but I wiſh to forbear contraſting with this year, the Company of 1793, becauſe I am aware, that Mr Kemble may ſay a rival The-

atre prevented him from being able to engage Wilſon, Bowden, and Mrs Billington, who were in Mrs Eaſton's Company, and who would have given luſtre to his motley crew at the Circus.

In 1784, Mr Jackſon had

Meſſrs. Woods,	Mrs Baddely,
Cautherly,	Jackſon,
Collins,	Charteris,
Johnſon,	Miſs Morris,
Moſs,	
Dalton, (a Singer)	
Lamaſh,—and	

The inimitable Henderſon;

with fourteen or fifteen others, who, tho' not entitled to be claſſed among great Actors, were uſeful Performers, ſuch as Bell, Hallion, Jones, &c.

The year 1794, taken in contraſt, is more in favour of Mr Kemble than any o-

ther; becauſe, although he had no *ſtanding* Company of any great merit, yet, at different periods, he had moſt eminent Performers.—Beſides Lee Lewes, Woods, Lamaſh, and Mrs Kemble, we had John Kemble for ſix nights at opening the houſe, thereafter John Palmer.—Wilſon came in April, and Incledon, Kelly, Mrs Crouch, and Miſs Poole, in ſummer—Young Johnſtone alſo was brought out this ſeaſon.

The year 1785 produced ſomething novel, as did almoſt every year during Mr Jackſon's management—In addition to Woods, Ward, Lamaſh, Bulkely and Baddely, we had

Meſſrs. Yates,	Mrs Yates,
Clinch,	And, during the ſummer,
Kippling,	Mrs Siddons.
Duncan;	

In the 1795, there was indeed a ſtrange

kind of Company—Except Woods and Rock, there was not a name worth mentioning ; and the female part of the houſe was confined to Mrs Kemble, and the honourable Mrs Twiſleton, whoſe title was not her leaſt recommendation.—To make ſmall amends for ſo homely a group, we were indulged with a few nights of the Manager's brother and ſiſter at *ſeparate* periods during the ſummer----they have both been here at once, but to have appeared together, would have been too great an *honour* for Edinburgh.

I find that to follow out the contraſt would exceed the limits you can afford me in one paper, and ſhall therefore poſtpone the remaining years---But, ſo far as I have gone, the compariſon between real merit and buffoonery, well laid out expence upon ſalaries deſervedly due to eminent per-

formers, and unexampled parſimony, muſt be ſtriking.---Mr Kemble has palmed upon the public indulgence, a race of beings whom Nature never deſigned for public notice; and vaunts of his expence, no doubt as reproaching us for ingratitude, in not giving him as much money as his merits entitle him to.

By the way, I hear that the perſons who were permitted ſo groſsly to inſult the audience the laſt time I was in the Theatre, have been fined, which at leaſt is a mark of diſapprobation in the civil magiſtrate.---JUNIUS talks of "an unfledged "race who infeſted our ſtreets, and diſho-"noured our public places" in his time; but, now a-days, the obſervation may be applied to a race ſenior in years, if not in underſtanding.---I am, Sir, yours, &c.

Wedneſday, 7th Feb. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

SIR,

IN my laſt I brought Mr Kemble's management down to 1795, and I ſhall now take the year following, with its contraſt.

In 1786, the Edinburgh Company of Comedians was moſt reſpectable;—during the winter and ſummer it conſiſted of nearly forty performers male and female, among whom were

Mr Clinch,
Woods,
Wilſon,
O'Reily,
Kippling,
Lamaſh.

Mrs Crawford,
Iliff,
Charteris,

And "though laſt, not *leaſt*," Mr Stephen Kemble. In the ſummer we had Pope, Mrs Pope, Mrs Jordan, and the celebrated Mrs Kennedy.

In 1796 we had Woods and Rock—Mrs Kemble and Mrs Twiſleton (I was wrong in ſaying ſhe was here in 1795). In the ſpring we foſtered a promiſing ſprig of our own growth (Johnſton), whom Mr Kemble ſneeringly called "my Rosci-us;"—and at the races came Miſs Wallis and Mr Incledon, whoſe talents, I am glad of an opportunity of ſaying, led me every night to the Theatre. Now I beg leave to aſk the moſt determined puffer of Mr Kemble, even he who wrote that puff of puffs in the Courant of Thurſday laſt, if there was another perſon fit to be called an actor that ſeaſon? If he admits it, and he muſt admit it, I aſk him, was this a company fit for the Capital of Scotland?

In 1787, beſides Woods, Wilſon, and Lamaſh, who were ſtanding diſhes, we had Fennel, Moſs, Ward, Archer—Mrs

Robinſon, Mrs Wroton, Mrs Kemble, &c. and for ſome nights Lee-Lewes and Mrs Jordan.

If 1796 was bad, 1797 was truly deſpicable; Woods and Rock were the only men whoſe merit could aſpire ſo high as two guineas a week—Miſs Gough and Mrs Kemble were both certainly good, but not fit for every thing; and at the races came Mr Banniſter, junior, who would have pleaſed much better if leſs had been puffed and promiſed.—Theſe were the flower of the company: the remainder was compoſed of your Egans, Barnets, Siddons, Bews, and "ſuch fellows as "could find room no where" but at the THEATRE ROYAL of Edinburgh!

The company in 1788 was filled with nearly the ſame names as the year preced-

ing, and in addition to theſe were Mrs Bulkley and Miſs George, to ſupply the loſs of Robinſon and Kemble.—Mrs. Siddons alſo paid us a third viſit.

Of the 1798 I ſhall ſay nothing.—The troop may be ſeen four times a-week in Shakeſpeare Square, by all who chooſe to judge for themſelves. How far they may be amended in the courſe of the ſeaſon, or how far we may be duped by *ſpectres* in this age of alarm and terror, is yet to be determined.

If Mr Kemble thinks I am hard to pleaſe, he muſt impute it to its real cauſe. I am an amateur of the ſtage. In my time I fared ſumptuouſly on this my favourite entertainment, and I have not yet brought my ſtomach to reliſh the huſks on which Mr Kemble feeds us.

But let him comfort himſelf; his Bews, his Scrivens, and his Melvins, go down with ſome folks; for I obſerve that a brother critic, who has aſſumed the very deciſive title of "*Theatrical Cenſor*," and who for his amuſement, and three-pence, *obliges* the public once a-week with his lucubrations, is pleaſed to aſſure us, that there are *many* who prefer "the ſimple "unaffected Mr Melvin to the accompliſhed "and finiſhed Mr Banniſter."

I never thought Mr Banniſter ſo great an actor as the newſpaper puffs led me to expect. Neither do I think him

"That Banniſter, with ſtir and endleſs rout,
"Whoſe fame will laſt—until he gets the gout!"

I don't blame the *Cenſor* for executing the office of the Roman magiſtrate whoſe title he has taken, and levying a tax on Thea-

tricals if he can get it; nor do I mean to hint, that,

" for half a crown,
" He'd ſwear the owl excell'd the morning lark;"

but if I compliment his honeſty, I muſt do it at the expence of his judgment. Whatever Banniſter is when compared to King or Palmer, he certainly is a Coloſſus to Melvin.

" Oh! Judgment, thou art fled to brutiſh beaſts,
" And men have loſt their reaſon."

I have now, Sir, gone through the ſeven dull years of Mr Kemble's adminiſtration; and when I look back upon it, and compare it with the ſeven years that went before, I am irreſiſtibly led to think of another very great performer and manager, who has, during the ſame period, been " climbing downwards and advancing " backwards," without even the little

gleam of light which the year 1794 afforded the Edinburgh audience. If we take 1788 and contraſt it with 1798, the difference is ſo immenſe, that we are ſtruck with aſtoniſhment at ſeeing the *great* audience at the one performance, and the *little* audience at the other, ſitting with ſuch cool indifference, and reading the puffs of the reſpective managers. But our amazement in ſome degree ceaſes, if we compare the human mind to the traveller: If we attempt to ſhove him down the hill at once, he revolts boldly, and it is an equal chance that he conquers; but take him by the hand, coax him, lead him gently down, and he will go, aye to the very bottom.---Neither does he ſee how far he has come by turning round and looking to his heels, unleſs he raiſes his eyes to the

envied eminence he once poſſeſſed, and tries the arduous taſk of regaining it.

I am, &c.

EDIN. Feb. 12th, TIMOTHY PLAIN.

ALL IN THE WRONG.

SIR,

IN my laſt letter I finiſhed the contraſt betwixt the performers at this Theatre from 1782 to 1788, and thoſe of Mr Kemble's correſponding years. I cannot pretend to ſay what future years may produce, but I think the public ought to know upon what footing the Theatre of Edinburgh ſtood during the years 1789 and 1790, ſo as they may judge in time coming.

In 1789, beſides uſeful actors, there were

Mr King,
Holman,
Woods,
Wilſon,
Williamſon,
Archer,
Moſs, &c.

Miſs George,
Hughes,
Mrs Barresford,
Jackſon,
Charteris, &c.

And Mrs Jordan in the ſummer.

In 1790, we had

Mr King,
Pope,
Woods,
Wilſon,
Williamſon,
Moſs,
Lamaſh,
Archer, &c.

Mrs Eſten,
Barresford,
Jackſon,
Charteris,
Miſs Fontenelle, &c.

And Miſs Farren in the ſummer.

Having finiſhed what I propoſed, in or-

der to ſhow that Mr Kemble's Company are by no means equal to thoſe of his predeceſſors, or to what the city of Edinburgh have a right to expect, I at the ſame time acknowledge that *certain* plays may be well performed by them—for inſtance, Murphy's All in the Wrong, which I ſaw on Monday night laſt.

There is no comedy in the Engliſh Drama more properly named than this one. It, as well as every other piece of this author's, proves his thorough knowledge of ſtage effect; but the ſentiments are not original, nor is there any obvious moral. The dialogue, however, is ſpirited, and not ill ſuited to the characters, although merely kept alive by buſtle and a hurry of incident; of courſe, though it may exiſt on the ſtage, it muſt be a poor companion in the cloſet.

The four principal characters are of ſimilar diſpoſitions, only that two of them are married and two of them ſingle; and on the acting of theſe four, the piece entirely depends.

Sir JOHN and Lady RESTLESS ſeem reſolved to be jealous, right or wrong, and to take alarm at every trifling circumſtance, without reaſonable or natural inveſtigation. Sir John is weak, precipitate, and truly "makes the meat he feeds on." Lee-Lewes, whoſe variety in acting is always conſpicuous, was here peculiarly happy.—His manner of reproaching Lady Reſtleſs for *her* ſuppoſed infidelity---his confuſion when he found that her Ladyſhip had ſeen BELINDA in *his* arms, and alſo when ſhe meets him in a maſk as MARMALET---and his manner of making up to BEVERLY, to compare his perſon with the

original of the picture found in his wife's cuſtody, muſt have ſatisfied the moſt rigid critic of his knowledge of the author, and his abilities to execute his meaning.

Beverley is as ſtrange a batchelor as Sir John is a huſband---intolerably fretful, without reaſon---indelicately ſuſpicious, and altogether out of nature.---Such as he is, Woods did him conſiderable juſtice; but I muſt ſay he is not the lover; and the amorous ſwain will never add to his reputation as an actor.

Lady Restless is, like her huſband, conſtantly in purſuit of ſhadows that tend only to increaſe jealouſy, emphatically called, by an ingenious author,

——— "the hydra of calamities,
"The ſeven-fold death."

---Miſs Gough gave much pleaſure in the

part. She was highly ſucceſsful when ſhe upbraided Sir John with his conduct to Belinda, and in the ſcene where ſhe perſonated Marmalet.---But I would recommend to her, when next ſhe performs this character, not to tragedize *quite* ſo much ---whimſical as Lady Reſtleſs is, ſhe may be made "an overdoing termagant."

Belinda is bad enough, but not quite ſuch an oddity as her lover, and ſeems rather more willing to be happy than any of the other jarring parties in this piece. Mrs Kemble's delicate mode of expreſſion particularly intereſted the audience in her favour, when, by the loſs of the picture, ſhe was thrown into ſo diſtreſſing a ſituation as to be obliged to ſolicit even Beverley's hearing her explanations, inſtead of feaſting her eyes and ears with *his* addreſſes at her feet -- and on the whole gave general ſatisfaction.

With regard to the reſt of the *dramatis perſonæ*, particularly thoſe who played BELMOUNT and CLARISSA,

" Fain would the muſe attempt to match their
" fame,
" And give their acting ſome *deſerved* name:
" But all the languages that e'er were taught
" Cannot beſtow ſuch cenſures as they aught."

I am, &c.

EDIN. 14th Feb. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

HEIR AT LAW.

SIR,

THE HEIR AT LAW was advertiſed for the *third* time on Wedneſday laſt, and I made one of the audience that evening. The play has little originality---the buſineſs in many places is languid---ſome of the in-

cidents are not very natural----and certain paſſages are highly exceptionable.

Dr. Pengloss, if I am not miſinformed, is drawn for a certain living ſycophantic pedant, who has made no ſmall noiſe with his political dogmas. The oddities and eccentricities of the part were well hit off by Mr Lee Lewes: his manner of giving the quotations from almoſt every Poet of any note was truly entertaining.

Stedfast, although requiring no powers in an actor, is of conſequence in the piece; but I would have paſſed it over, except in compliment to Mr Woods, who, where he is concerned, certainly ought not to be unnoticed in any obſervations on the Theatre---he ſpoke the part juſtly.

The vulgarity and groſs ignorance of

the CITY CHANDLER was pretty well depicted by Mr Rock, but he was rather imperfect, a fault no way excuſable in a third performance within a few days of each o-other. Mr Rock, knowing my eſteem for him, will take this *plainneſs* in good part.

In DICK DOWLAS, Mr Melvin was below criticiſm, and I ſhould not have mentioned his name, had I not wiſhed to ſhow in what he is totally defective, to ſupport my opinion of him, in oppoſition to what is given in a *weekly publication*. When he appeared as Old Dowlas's ſon, his gait was altogether inapplicable. The part required affectation, but he made it an *idiot*, inſtead of that aukward deportment to be looked for in one who, from an illiterate attorney's clerk, imagines himſelf advanced to a lord's ſon and heir. He was alſo deficient in the extreme in his ſcenes with

Homeſpun and Cicely, and particularly where Pengloſs propoſes to inſtruct him in the claſſics.

Moreland is a character having nothing material either to ſay or to do, except where he quarrels with Stedfaſt—ſo Mr Campbell was ſufferable and no more.

The part of Kenrick *might* be made a very agreeable Hibernian.—Unfortunately it was caſt to Mr Denman.

The honeſt, generous Zekiel Homespun was, without doubt, the beſt performance of Scriven that I have ſeen; but he was ſo fond of *throwing out*, to ſpeak theatrically, and had ſo often recourſe to his waggiſh tricks and affected arch looks, that he frequently betrayed the rural cha-

racter he ſhould have repreſented, obſerving the rule, no doubt,

" If once the *galleries* give the hand,
" A fig for thoſe that underſtand."

Miſs Biggs, in Lady DUBERLY, was pert enough, but wanted every other requiſite. Our old friends Mrs Webb or Mrs Charteris would have delighted in ſuch a part.

The ſimple, artleſs CICELY HOMESPUN could not be in better hands than Mrs Kemble's.—In the ſoft, winning female characters, this lady has few rivals.

Although I do not often ſtay the Farce, yet, as this evening was to ptoduce ſomething new, I was fool enough to wait for *St. Kilda in Edinburgh*, or *News from Camperdown*, without thinking, that the blockhead who could contrive ſuch a title, was

certainly unfit to compoſe any thing worth either ſeeing or reading. I cannot ſufficiently blame the Manager, for ſuffering the performance of a piece replete with the groſſeſt indecency, in hopes of drawing a few extra pounds by the attractive ſound of CAMPERDOWN, now lugged in, head and ſhoulders, to every thing we eat, drink, or wear.—The heroes were, a *libertine* and a *pimp*. The principal ſtory was the debauchery of a Highland laſs. The dialogue conſiſted of

" Nonſenſe precipitate, like running lead,
" That ſlips thro' cracks and zigzags of the head;
" All that on folly frenzy could beget,
" Fruits of dull heat, and ſooterkins of wit."

And yet, *Dei Boni!* the author, as I underſtand, is a *young Clergyman*. If he happens to ſee this paper, let him take a friend's advice, and continue to load the ſhelves of

the bookſeller with volumes of *Hiſtories* and *Tours*,

" Redeem'd from tapers and defrauded pies."—

Let him croak in a certain public aſſembly, and think himſelf an orator—

" Imbrown'd in native bronze, let H—— ſtand,
" Tuning his voice, and balancing his hands."

Theſe are not very *hazardous* amuſements, for nobody reads his *Tours*, and his audience can pair off: But Parnaſſus is a hill he cannot mount, and his " dull aſs " will never mend his pace by beating." The piece was execrated---hiſſed----and, in ſpite of the fineſſe of introducing the *King's Anthem*, and *Rule Britannia*, was utterly *damned*.

I cannot finiſh this letter, without expreſſing a hope, that thoſe who have been " the procuring cauſe" of the ſtate the

country is now in, will keep in mind Mr Kemble's wondrous generoſity in giving a *Tueſday* Evening's profits towards the defence of the kingdom.---I am, &c.

EDIN. 24th Feb. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

PROVOK'D HUSBAND.—LOVE MAKES A MAN.

SIR,

ON Thurſday ſe'nnight I went to ſee HENRY IV. but found it changed to the Comedy of the PROVOK'D HUSBAND, as was ſaid, on account of the indiſpoſition of a principal performer. Who he was we were not told; but the bills informed us, that the only parts of any conſequence in the piece were to be perſonated by KEMBLE, MELVIN, and CAMPBELL. I ſin-

cerely believe that they all *claim* the appellation; and they may ſettle among themſelves to which of them it belongs.

The Provok'd Huſband I conſider to be among the firſt comedies in the Engliſh language, both in point of entertainment, character, and moral. A great number of the parts require performers of merit; and there is conſequently much room for obſervation: but almoſt the bare mention of its *caſt*, upon this occaſion, ſeems to be criticiſm ſufficient.

Mr Woods has nothing about him that can give any idea of LORD TOWNLY.---No perſon is more willing to admit this gentleman's merit than I am, as I have all along ſhown; but in this character he was deficient, in conſequence of perſon, in voice, and action.

Miſs Gough's LADY TOWNLY was ſuch as I cannot admire, though ſhe certainly underſtood the part. She was chaſte and pathetic in the 5th act; but, through the reſt of the character, ſhe could not aſſume that eaſe and indifference, accompanied with the ſprightlineſs and gaiety, requiſite for this faſhionable female.---I have all along told her, that this line was not ſuited to her powers; and, if the nature of her agreement is ſuch as that the manager can compel her to it, I have only to ſay, that, in ſo doing, he wants both humanity and judgment, becauſe he ſacrifices her intereſt without benefiting himſelf.

Rock ſeemed to know what JOHN MOODY *ought* to be; but he did not ſpeak the part correct, in point of accent.

The other performers in the piece

ſeemed emulous only who ſhould be leaſt worthy of the critic's notice.

On Saturday was acted LOVE MAKES A MAN---Every perſon who is at all acquainted with the ſtage, muſt admit Cibber's knowledge of theatrical buſineſs; but I am apt to think this production of his Muſe has been "ſent into this breathing world," without ſuch conſideration as the author uſually beſtowed on his compoſitions. The plot is both irregular and pantomimical; and the language, tho' ſpirited, is in ſome places very cenſurable.

DON LEWIS is a ſingular being, poſſeſſing good nature, yet fond of contradiction. The cynical mode of expreſſion neceſſary for it was moſt admirably managed by Mr Lee-Lewes. His retorts on Clodio were excellent; his happineſs when

Carlos ventures to approach Angelina, and his preventing Clodio from interrupting them, were truly the *vis comica*. Had he been ſupported by the other male characters in the piece, the play would have been a feaſt indeed; but, as he himſelf ſaid, moſt of them were "miſerable "wretches—ſad dogs."

Carlos is a ſtudent, romantic in his ideas; but, as a lover, he is diſintereſted and conſtant.---I have often had pleaſure from Mr Woods' performance of this pedant, his action and deportment in the character, being every thing a judicious audience could deſire. Why, therefore, on this occaſion, it was given to Mr Campbell, I cannot divine; but this I can with truth ſay, that ſuch an attempt I have ſcarcely witneſſed. His deportment was awkward---his limbs void of ſymmetry---

his action extravagant, without meaning---his voice a croaking monotony---and his features moſt defective in expreſſion. He ſpoke *one* ſentence, the truth and propriety of which ſeemed to be univerſally admitted---" I confeſs I'm little practis'd in the " rules of grac'd behaviour." In his whole ſpeeches, when introduced to Angelina, which, to give in character, ſhould be with " diſſolving ſoftneſs," he ranted as if he had been Hamlet bellowing to Laertes—

——" I'll fight with him, upon this theme,
" Until my eye lids will no longer wag."

Where the paſſions come in, when Louiſa threatens to ſtrangle Angelina, he was ſo boiſterous, and violated nature ſo much, that, in ſome places, he might have paſſed for Alexander in the mad ſcene, or even for our Manager in the fallen Emperor, vociferating that he would

——————" deal, like Alha,
" His angry thunder on the frighted world."

CLODIO is a volatile fool, whoſe various ſituations render him a favourable part to an actor of ordinary abilities. On Saturday, he was in the hands of Mr Melvin, the Theatrical Cockatoo of Edinburgh. To be cenſuring always, is extremely painful; and yet, in Clodio, I muſt ſay he was as unhappy as in any thing I have ſeen him. He ſeems to be perfectly incorrigible too, and entirely made up of vanity and falſe conſequence, without a ſingle requiſite to fill the line of buſineſs he has been thruſt into. His vacant face, unmeaning eye, and ſwaggering gait, may paſs in PRINCE PRETTYMAN, but never can ſuit Clodio.

" Plac'd in ſome *barn*, he might perhaps have ſhone,
" And happy *ſtrollers* mark'd him for their own."

SANCHO affords no great opportunity to diſplay comic talents; but Mr Rock made it of more conſequence than I expected; which ſhows what he *can* do.

Miſs Gough, in appearance, action, voice, countenance, and dreſs, was the beſt ANGELINA I have ſeen theſe ſome years. The part does not require the firſt rate powers; but that did not leſſen this lady's attention to its repreſentation, ſhe having ſpoke every ſentence in the moſt agreeable and intereſting manner.—By the way, I am informed that Miſs Gough furniſhes her own dreſſes; and I hope her encouragement from the Manager is ſuitable to thoſe ſhe provides. Her garb in Angelina was elegant and beautiful.

ANTONIO, CHARINO, and LOUISA, were perſonated by Scriven, Denman, and Miſs

Biggs. I have frequently obliged them; and I hope they will conſider my not entering into particulars for once as an additional obligation. They,

" With bodies coarſely fill'd, and vacant ſouls,
" Sleep like the labour'd hinds, and never think."

I am, &c.

EDIN. Mar. 5. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

KNOW YOUR OWN MIND.

SIR,

IT has been ſaid, and, I believe, with truth, that though Murphy, from his extenſive knowledge of theatrical action, and its effects, has been enabled to furniſh the world with ſome agreeable plays, yet, if the dead were to call out for their own, he would, like the bird with borrowed feathers, be almoſt in a ſtate of poetical

nakedneſs.------His KNOW YOUR OWN MIND, performed on Wedneſday, is an admirable jumble of characters, which, with ſcarce a grain of originality, is yet a pleaſing effort of his culling genius.

DASHWOOD poſſeſſes a kind of ſpirited, intricate pleaſantry, ſomewhat difficult to pourtray; but Mr Lee-Lewes's powers in execution were fully equal to the part. This gentleman has a *je ne ſcais quoi* about him, which makes every thing he undertakes intereſting and attractive---he was literally "the fiddle of the piece."

In Mr Melvin's MILLAMOUR, a well drawn whimſical character,

——————"Obſerve that ſettled *glare*,
"That better ſpeaks the puppet than the player."

His attempts at freedom and eaſe were irkſomely conſtrained; and tho' he prattled

away, inſtead of making us laugh, his unfortunate exertions to do *ſomething* only excited compaſſion, and a conſequent admiration of the Manager, who could ſet on ſuch a performer in one of the firſt characters in genteel comedy, before as polite an audience as ever graced the theatre of this city. I well remember when BROWNE (our original *Charles* in the *School for Scandal*) and WARD performed this part, the play was quite the *ton*; but, with the preſent *Millamour*, I hope it will not again be numbered in the liſt of our dramatic exhibitions.

MALVIL, Mr Campbell,

"Of judgment barren, and as void of taſte."

Mr Rock ſpoke BYGROVE "with good "accent and good diſcretion," ſacrificing a gallery horſe laugh, which he might have

got, to play the part chaſtely and correctly.

Sir JOHN MILLAMOUR, Captain BYGROVE, and Sir HARRY LOVEIT, by Denman, Allen, and Bew, were a *trio*, perfectly in *uniſon;* nor could Murphy himſelf have decided which of them were entitled to the palm of—inſipidity.

Lady BELL has rather a tinge of the coquette, but is capable of love, and perfectly virtuous. There is a ſprightlineſs and airy demeanour neceſſary for the character, which Mrs Kemble could not reach, though her agreeable appearance and unaffected manner, rendered her above mediocrity.

Miſs NEVILLE is an intereſting female, whoſe feelings are frequently awakened by

Mrs Bromly tantalizing her with paſt ſervices in a forlorn ſituation.—Miſs Gough diſplayed a thorough knowledge of her author in the part, with a degree of modeſty and reſerve truly characteriſtic of her delicate ſituation, enforcing every word ſhe uttered upon both the head and heart.---I am, &c.

EDIN. 10th March. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

THE CASTLE SPECTRE.

SIR,

VARIOUS are the ways our Members of Parliament employ the ſeven years they ought to dedicate to the affairs of the nation. Some, like Sir Francis Wronghead, "ſay *no*, when they ſhould ſay *aye*," if it ſuits their intereſt; ſome leave the Houſe altogether; and others write gloo-

my novels and horrid plays. Of the latter caſt is " M. G. Lewis, Eſq. M. P. author of " The Monk" and " The CASTLE SPECTRE."

His novel I have read, and I hardly think there is any modern performance more abſurd in the ſtory, or more immoral or indecent in its tendency. His play, which has made ſo much noiſe in the theatrical world for ſome time paſt, was for the firſt time brought forward here on Monday laſt.---As might have been expected, " the world was there," and I among the reſt. The ſcenery, painted by a well-known Artiſt, was indeed beautiful; the dreſſes, notwithſtanding all the puffing, were only paſſable.---" The appropriate " decorations," were perhaps the tar links uſed for torches, which had nearly ſuffocated the audience; though, I am happy

to learn, theſe have ſince been changed for flambeaux. The univerſal dirtineſs of the houſe---the black and diſmal aſpect in pit, boxes, and gallery, were probably *deſigned* for contributing to the awful grandeur of the Spectre's " ſplendid chamber" and " gloomy ſubterraneous dungeon," to ſhow the Manager's gratitude, and that he is " ever mindful of the duty he owes " the public!!!"

This " Drama," which is neither " tra-- " gedy, comedy, hiſtory, paſtoral, paſto- " ral-comical, hiſtorical-paſtoral, ſcene un- " dividable, or poem unlimited," is, in my opinion, the moſt irregular, abſurd, and unnatural performance that ever was ſhown upon the ſtage, either for inſtruction or amuſement. Every character and ſentiment, from beginning to end, are ſtolen from ſome known play, or faſhion-

able novel; and the little that is original, in point of incident, is diſgraceful to human nature, and therefore unfit for exhibition.

The virtuous Brutus thought his time not ill employed in a journey from Rome to Naples, only to ſee a company of comedians, whom he afterwards recommended to the patronage of Cicero. The celebrated Addiſon, in alluſion to an expreſſion of Pope's, ſaid,

"A well wrote play's the nobleſt work of man."

And the pious Tillotſon aſſerts, that dramatic compoſitions may be framed, ſo as to be innocently diverting, and yet ſo uſeful as to put folly and vice out of countenance. But now, we ſee ſuch ſcenes as ſhock every idea of modeſty, and exhibit mankind in a view more truly deteſtable than the Yahoos of Gulliver;—and yet we

are told that this " ſplendid Drama" (beholden only to the painter and the taylor) is to be " The Rage," while ſterling Merit, wondering at the waywardneſs of fickle Taſte, looks weeping on, and

" Common Senſe ſtands trembling at the
" door."

Osmond is borrowed from " Barbaroſ-
" ſa" and Miſs Moore's " Douglas," but is worſe than either. To ſuppoſe a man in love with his brother's wife, and murdering her; then outrageouſly ſetting on his own niece, the child of her he murdered; and laſtly, the means he uſes of terrifying a father (his own brother) to concur in inceſt and debauchery, ſo exceeds all known or heard-of wickedneſs, that it was left for M. G. Lewis, Eſq. to contrive a ſcene ſo horrible, and ſo revolting to every human feeling. Mr Woods did much

more for the part than it did for him—I was ſorry to ſee him in it.

PERCY is a deſpicable imitation of the hero in the tragedy of that name; and even the little merit that he has was thrown away upon his repreſentative, Mr Campbell, who was

——————" awkward, without the ſkill
" Of moving gracefully, or ſtanding ſtill."

Father PHILIP is admitted by the author to be a copy of Sheridan's *Father Paul*, and a poor copy it is, without a line or ſentiment to utter deſerving of notice. —Mr Rock laboured through it with a conſiderable ſhare of humour.

Mr Lewis's confidence is only to be equalled by his ignorance, when he " bold-" ly aſſerts, without vanity (as he expreſſes

" himſelf), that MOTLEY is quite new " to the ſtage."—I aſſert that this part is not new, but is a " ſtale, flat, and un- " profitable" mixture of Shakeſpeare's Touchſtone, and Sharp in the " Lying " Valet." Scriven, with all his petulance, could not get *a hand* in it.

HASSAN is denied by the author to be any reſemblance of Zanga, although it is perfectly manifeſt that he is juſt a type of that character, and another African in " Such Things Are."---With the aſſiſtance of burnt cork, a long robe, and a natural harſhneſs of voice, Mr Melvin makes a better negro than any thing I have ſeen him attempt.

ANGELA is a ſtrange compound of Juliet and Euphraſia, and almoſt every other diſtreſſed damſel in the Drama---her

happy days are gone before ſhe is introduced to the audience, and her only efforts during the time we ſee her, are to avoid brutal violation;---in doing this ſhe has occaſion to diſplay much diſtreſs, with energy of mind, to which Mrs Kemble did the greateſt juſtice.

ALICE is acknowledged by the author to be a copy of the Nurſe in "Romeo "and Juliet." It is a ſilly flippant character; but, ſuch as it is, Miſs Biggs worked through it with tolerable decency.

"Though laſt, *not* leaſt" in our eſteem, comes the *Spectre*. That the author of "The Monk" ſhould have a ghoſt in any of his productions is not ſurpriſing. It is much to be wiſhed, however, that when our ſenſes are tortured by the appearance of *ſpirits*, they ſhould have *ſomething* "to

" act, to do, and to perform," connected with the buſineſs of the piece.---Far from it was the fact here.---Poor Evelina is ſuppoſed every night to ſing (what neither the authors of " Tom Thumb" or the " Re-" hearſal" could ſufficiently ridicule)---

" Lullaby, lullaby—huſh thee my dear,
" Thy father is coming, and ſoon will be here."

---Her buſineſs is to pay a viſit to the picture of her huſband, while the diſconſolate man is all the while ſitting in the cellar, where ſhe might have paid her reſpects to him in *propria perſona* at any time for ſixteen years. This is her firſt appearance, which tends only to frighten her own daughter, who has done harm to no perſon---and her laſt, is at the concluding ſcene, where there is no occaſion for her interference, as the gallant Percy and his party are by that time maſters of the caſtle. Then, to conclude the abſurdity,

this poor, idle, inoffenſive ghoſt, is hurried down to hell with ſulphur and roſin, neither huſband nor daughter ſo much as once regretting her untimely fate, or even mentioning her name. With *ſuch* a Spectre what could any perſon do? yet Miſs Gough in its repreſentation, even in dumb ſhow, made it

" Speak with moſt miraculous organ."

I ſhall finiſh my obſervations on this *indeſcribable nothing*, by mentioning an obvious blunder in the cataſtrophe, that it has no *dénouement*, which, with other imperfections not enumerated, brings to my recollection the concluſion of the mock tragedy in Shakeſpeare's " Mid-ſummer " Night's Dream."

Bottom—" Will it pleaſe you to ſee the epi-" logue, or to hear a bergomaſk dance between " two of our company?"

Theſeus—" No epilogue, I pray you, for your " play needs no excuſe—never excuſe—for when " the players are all dead, there need none to be " blam'd. Marry, if he that writ it had play'd " *Pyramus*, and hung himſelf in *Thisbe*'s garter, " it would have been a fine tragedy."

I am, &c.

EDIN. 16th Mar. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

HEIR AT LAW.

SIR,

WHILE the " *liberal* and *enlightened* " audience of Edinburgh," as Mr Kemble calls them, have been enjoying the nightly exhibition of the *Spectre* that has for theſe ſome weeks haunted our Theatre, I have been entirely excluded from my favourite evening's amuſement. An " ob- " ſtinate rationality," as Dr Johnſon calls

it, makes it impoſſible for me to reliſh a piece " that blurs the grace and bluſh of modeſty." Mr Elliſton having, however, *laid the Spirit for a time*, I went laſt night to ſee this gentleman perform PENGLOSS, in the " HEIR AT LAW." The dreſs of this character prevented me from judging of Mr Elliſton's countenance or figure, neither could I decide on his voice or deportment as I could have wiſhed; but though he has come here with ſome reputation as an actor, and is well ſpoken of in ſome parts, yet I preſume every perſon preſent will allow, that there never was any character ſo over done as his Peter Pengloſs.---His mummery and grimace when Dowlas tells him he ſhould be tutor to his ſon, with a ſalary of 300l. a-year, and when he delivers the letter to young Dowlas, acquainting him that his father had ſucceeded to a peerage, was ten times

more ridiculous than my old friend Moſs in Lingo, when introducing himſelf to the princeſs Ruſty Fuſty.---His dance at the end of the 4th act, was a piece of burleſque that would have diſgraced one of Bayes's horſes.---He not only caricatured a caricature, but, as Old Dowlas ſaid of him, " he grunted like a pig;" and in giving his quotation, he bellowed out the author's name in the ſame tone of voice with the words quoted---thus---

" Othello's occupation's gone—Shakeſpeare"
" 'Tis falſe—Rowe ;"

which in effect deſtroyed both the ſpirit and ſenſe of the author. If Mr Elliſton is an original in this character, I think he is a very bad one; if he is a copy, I wiſh he had ſeen and copied Lee-Lewes; or that, coming after that gentleman, he had not attempted the part in this Theatre.

I hope, however, I ſhall ſee him do ſomething more ſuited to his abilities before he leaves Edinburgh; and he may be aſſured I ſhall take infinitely more pleaſure in praiſing him, ſhould he deſerve it, than I do in telling him of his blemiſhes.

As the part of CICELY HOMESPUN was in the hands of a lady quite unfit for it, after we had ſeen Mrs Kemble, the piece in general fell vaſtly ſhort of the laſt repreſentation.

The Manager, like Colley of old, finding no "bard to ſing his praiſe," continues to chaunt them forth himſelf, through the organ of the play-bill and the prompter.---Laſt night he told us, that he hoped his engaging Mr Elliſton "at *this* period, "will be accepted by the public as a teſti- "mony of his reſpect and gratitude." I

wiſh ſincerely he would give us another teſtimony of his reſpect and gratitude, and beſtow a little money in cleaning at leaſt, if he won't ornament the houſe. The *Caſtle Spectre* has brought him 500 guineas clear gain; I ſpeak within bounds when I ſay ſo; yet ſtill this Theatre, for the accommodation of his liberal patrons of Edinburgh, is as mean and dirty as that gloomy receptacle in which he exhibits to the ſons and daughters of the bowels of the earth at Newcaſtle.

I am, &c.

EDIN. 5th April. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

MACBETH.

SIR,

HAVING ſeen Mr Elliſton in Comedy, I went on Saturday to the play of MAC-

BETH, that I might have alſo a ſpecimen of his powers in Tragedy. I cannot ſay that this is a favourite play of mine; but as the Manager had ſolemnly aſſured the Town that Mr Elliſton could only perform *five nights*, and as this was the laſt of the five, I did not like to miſs it. At the end of the play, however, I found it was, like moſt of *his* aſſurances, all a bite, and I bluſhed to find myſelf taken in by a trick ſo very ſtale.

An eminent editor of Shakeſpeare has elegantly obſerved, that a poet who ſhould now produce the chief ends of his play by the aſſiſtance of ſupernatural agents, would be baniſhed from the theatre to the nurſery; but that in judging of the immortal bard, we muſt examine the genius of the age in which he lived, and then we will find he only turned the ſyſtem, at that time univerſally received, to his own ad-

vantage, without overburdening the credulity of his audience. Indeed when Shakeſpeare ſoars beyond the bounds of nature, he never forſakes ſenſe, but often reaches the very climax of ſublimity; and therefore his example is no rule for thoſe modern poetaſters who write execrable ſtuff of ghoſts and devils, helping each other to a branch of the laurel once a-month in the Reviews :—

" For Shakeſpeare's magic cannot copied be ;
" Within that circle none dare walk but he."

The laſt time I ſaw this tragedy, the Manager himſelf played the hero. Mr Kemble's figure certainly does not ſuit Macbeth. It is impoſſible for the mind to paint to itſelf

" The brave Macbeth—
" Diſdaining fortune, with his brandiſh'd ſteel,
" Like valour's minion, carving out his paſſage,"

and at the ſame time to figure him as ſquat and corpulent as fancy makes an Alderman of London.—But figure apart, I have no heſitation to ſay, that Mr Kemble is a better Macbeth than Mr Elliſton.

Mr Elliſton's figure, although of a different kind, is as little ſuited to this part as Mr Kemble's.—He is too ſhort, boyiſh, and inſignificant, to play the hero and the tyrant; neither has he the power of riſing beyond himſelf by his action, ſo as to make us loſe ſight of this inſignificance: For although a fine figure is by no means a *neceſſary* qualification to ſuch a character, it is certainly a *prepoſſeſſing* one, and where it is wanting, we naturally expect to find greatneſs of another kind.—Now, Mr Elliſton, in my mind, has neither.

In the firſt place, I will venture to af-

firm, that he does not underſtand the author. In the ſpeech beginning "If 'twere done," &c. he laid the emphaſis egregiouſly wrong throughout.—The lines,

——————"Then as his hoſt,
"Who ſhould againſt his murderer ſhut the
"door,
"Not bear the knife myſelf,"

were uttered in a manner ſo ludicrouſly, compoſed of ranting, grinning, and whining, that the audience entirely forgetting it was a tragedy,

"Smil'd in the tumult, and enjoy'd the ſtorm."

I think I may alſo venture to ſay, that he did not, in any one ſpeech, either feel himſelf, or intereſt the feelings of his auditors.—In ſome he was rapid, without reaſon or propriety; in others, he mouthed the words, like Braidwood teaching the deaf and dumb; and in the dying ſpeech,

he wreathed like a Harlequin, and bellowed like a hog.——Yet this is the *celebrated* actor, as Mr Kemble calls him, whoſe engagement is ſo high an obligation to the Edinburgh audience.

" What a commerce it is, when you get and you
" give!
" How did Grub Street re-echo the ſhouts that you
" rais'd.
" When he was be-Roſcius'd, and you was be-
" prais'd!"

I have been told by ſome gentlemen, whoſe opinion I highly regard, (but to whom I am unknown as your correſpondent) that Mr Elliſton is very capital in the Jew, *Sheva*.—Be it ſo.—I deny that ſucceſs in ſuch a character is any proof of merit. When a man has nothing to do, but pronounce elevated ſentiments, or do generous actions, it is of little conſequence how he ſpeaks; the ſame burſt of ap-

plauſe comes from the hand in the theatre, as from the eye in the cloſet. It is the part playing itſelf.

But that I may not be ſaid to neglect Mr Elliſton when he is great, and take him when he is contemptible, I ſhall, (now that I need not fear the elapſe of any limited number of nights) pay him one viſit more ere he leaves town; and to ſhow him I wiſh him well, I ſhall do it on his benefit night, when, if I poſſibly can, I ſhall pay him a parting compliment.

I have formerly ſpoken of Mr Woods and Miſs Gough in *M'Duff* and *Lady Macbeth;* the latter, I think, has rather improven. *Duncan, Banquo,* and *Malcolm,* were in the hands of

" A crew that Falſtaff's ſelf would bluſh to own."

I am, &c.

EDIN. 9th April. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

MOUNTAINEERS.

SIR,

AGREEABLE to my promiſe, I went laſt night to ſee Mr Elliſton in what I preſume he reckons one of his beſt parts, having made choice of it for his benefit.--- The MOUNTAINEERS is one of thoſe pieces which, like the Cid of Corneille, the French would call a Tragedy, but for which we have no name that I remember. The play was written for the part of Octavian, and Octavian for Mr John Kemble. In compoſing this character, Mr Colman has pillaged Timon, Romeo, Edgar, &c. not only of the ſentiments, but even the very words and phraſes: But as he has made a very capital mixture of the whole, Mr Kemble, who was completely fit for

each ingredient, made the *tout enſemble* at once terrifying and delightful. Need I add, that a part thus wrote for, and in a manner embracing all that Mr Kemble is capable of doing, far exceeds the utmoſt powers of Mr Elliſton. He has a pretty clear and comprehenſive voice; he has alſo the perfect uſe of his limbs; and, if a ſtart, or a convulſive bellow, were the only requiſites for the part, I ſhould think he might paſs on a benefit night, or very likely with thoſe who had never ſeen the original. But if we go into a nicer compariſon, we inſtantly find him wanting in that dignity of deportment, that familiarity with the ſtage, and, above all, that expreſſive countenance and ſpeaking eye, which marks every attitude, and every ſentiment, of the gentleman for whom this character was deſigned.—Mr Elliſton evi-

dently tries to copy Mr Kemble; but it is a fruitleſs taſk.

Infelix lolium et ſteriles naſcuntur avenæ!

But if Mr Elliſton would aim at leſs, he would do more. If he would moderate his extravagance of action, and temper, with judgment and ſtudy, that force and ſpirit which none will deny he poſſeſſes, I think he would be, in time, a good actor, and entitled to reſpect in any theatre of Britain.

BULCAZIN MULEY is a wretched, illegitimate attempt at Bajazet; for which no one whoever read a line of Rowe, will forgive Mr Colman.—Mr Campbell was ſet on for this part.—I doubt much if either time or ſtudy could mend this actor.—*Ex nihilo nihil.*

ZORAYDA is a ſecond edition of Arpaſia.—She, and her father Muley, are in-

troduced into this play by way of epiſode: But I think it was a lucky epiſode, as the chaſte and affecting manner of Miſs Gough afforded the audience a ſatisfaction we rarely meet with.

I have ſo often praiſed Mrs Kemble, when,

" In the ſimple ruſtic's homely cell,
" Nature aſſumes a nameleſs grace,"

that I think it only neceſſary to ſay, ſhe played the innocent AGNES as well as ſhe does every thing elſe.

Mrs Bramwell, in boy's clothes, convinced us ſhe is a very handſome woman. Her part gave her nothing elſe to do.

And now, as Saturday is announced for Mr Elliſton's *ſecond* laſt night, I mean to ſee him in Hamlet; and I hope this think-

ing philoſopher will ſuit his abilities better than the pedantic Pengloſs, the tyrannic Macbeth, or the raving mad Octavian.

I am, &c.

EDIN. 12th April. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

HENRY IV.

SIR,

AS the Play on Saturday was changed from HAMLET to HENRY IV. I had not an opportunity of ſeeing Mr Elliſton in a part which I conſider to be a kind of touchſtone for theatrical merit. Hamlet has nothing to ſay or do which can catch the noiſy tribute of applauſe from the hand of the pit, or the cudgel of the gallery; but he has, "that which paſſeth ſhow," a boundleſs field for the diſplay of judgment. —PRINCE HENRY, on the other hand, is

at once the libertine and the *hero*. His follies, however, are only the effect of levity; and when he caſts them off, he riſes ſo ſuperior, that he is ſure of the warmeſt approbation of the reader, or the ſpectator. In this part, therefore, I think Mr Elliſton ſhowed himſelf to advantage: His figure is tolerably genteel, and ſuited to the part; conſequently he looked the part well: His addreſs to his father, when deprecating his paſt conduct, was delivered firmly, but modeſtly,—with a proper degree of ſpirit, without ranting,—and was generally and deſervedly applauded.—If Mr Elliſton declined playing Hamlet, I conſider it as a proof of his judgment, and no ordinary ſtep towards his playing it to advantage hereafter: Diffidence is the *gradus ad Parnaſſum*; ſelf-conceit is the inſuperable bar to excellence in any thing.

The inimitable Falſtaff, that compound of vice and ſenſe, which none can eſteem, tho' none can deteſt, and all muſt laugh at, has been ſo often and ſo admirably repreſented, that I am ſure Mr Kemble can only conſider himſelf as the beſt perſon for it in the preſent company. I do not mean to ſay he is wrong in thinking ſo. He has a ſtrong, ſonorous voice, and a *perſon* very properly fitted for it; but he has an inflexibility of feature which cannot mark the various and ſudden tranſitions required for Falſtaff. When his humorous companions hide his horſe, and leave him groping in the dark, Mr Kemble was peculiarly unfortunate. Falſtaff is at this time in a paſſion: He ought "to fret like a gumm'd velvet," as Poins ſays; but Mr Kemble's exclamations of "Poins! Poins! Hal!" were uttered with ſuch a lamentable howl, as quite deſtroyed every idea of the au-

thor. The deſcription of his ſoldiers, too, as well as his account of engaging the eleven buckram men, were ſo totally void of humour, ſo monotonous, and ſuch a dead weight on the audience, that I am convinced Mr Kemble's principal reaſon for attempting this part muſt only have been his recollection of this adage:

"Falſtaff's fat back and mountain belly
"Is half the battle, let me tell ye."

Mr Campbell played Percy; and altho' the part admits of ranting, or rather is altogether a rant, yet ſtill I hope this gentleman will allow he was egregiouſly wrong when he turned his back on his ſovereign, and pleaded his cauſe to the audience. The audience, however entitled to reſpect or attention from a performer, do not wiſh for it at the expence of deſtroying the entertainment they came to enjoy. In the tem-

porary deception this enjoyment conſiſts, and whatever tends to diminiſh that deception detracts from their ſatisfaction; but in many other particulars the gallant Percy ſuffered egregiouſly at the hands of this performer, as well as by the Prince's ſword.—Neither his figure (which ſhould be bold, yet graceful), voice, or action, were at all ſuited to the character.

And now, Sir, as the *benefits* are coming on, I will probably ceaſe for a time to be your correſpondent; for I would be ſorry, indeed, to ſay any thing that might, however innocently intended, be conſtrued into a deſire to prejudice the intereſts of the ladies and gentlemen of the theatre. But as I am ſure they will *all* admit I have given them ſome *hints* worth attending to, and as I cannot help thinking Mr Kemble himſelf lies under a threefold obligation to me,

firſt, as an actor; ſecondly, as a manager; and, laſtly, for the many auditors who have gone to the theatre to judge him and me, I expect to ſee them return me their thanks in a body, in your next paper:—And at the ſame time, that I may alſo diſcharge my debt, I take this opportunity of thanking you, Sir, for your punctuality and attention, in inſerting theſe trifles, from your unknown correſpondent,

EDIN. 16th April. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

JANE SHORE.

SIR,

ALTHOUGH it was not my intention to deny myſelf the pleaſure of the Theatre during the Benefits; yet, for the reaſons aſſigned in my laſt letter, I did not mean to trouble you with any animadverſions on

the performance of them. But the play of JANE SHORE, as caſt for the benefit of Mr Hallion, was ſuch a *rara avis* here, ſo ſuited to take in the whole ſtrength of the Company for tragedy, and ſo well performed in every reſpect, that I am ſure Mr Kemble will find it his intereſt to oblige the public by repeating it.—If he does ſo, I ſhall then offer ſome particular obſervations on the individuals. HASTINGS, DUMONT, and JANE SHORE, were each excellently acted; but in ALICIA I think Miſs Gough ſhone conſpicuous: the part is an arduous one; yet I think I am juſtified in aſſerting, that her rage, horror, and diſtraction, fully kept pace with the meaning of the author, and was the beſt exhibition ſhe has made in this Theatre.

The Author of a ſilly obſcene Farce,

called *St. Kilda in Edinburgh;* or, *News from Camperdown,* which was brought forward here ſome time ago, and univerſally conſigned to damnation, has thought proper to print it, with an introductory preface, in which he admits, that the public execration was ſo complete and univerſal "that he does not believe all the colts of "all the beggars aſſes in the kingdom, if "aſſembled in Shakeſpeare's Square, without their mothers, and impatient to find "them, could bray a more hideous din" —"It was as if a whole congregation of "*owls,* diſturbed by the ſtrain of ſome "*nightingale* from their midnight ſlumbers, had ſuddenly lifted up their voices," &c. &c. But with that genuine modeſty which always marks true merit, he ſays, "A *Drama* worthy of approbation *I* furniſhed! *Intellects* I could not "ſupply to thoſe oxen, aſſes, calves, and

" colts, who erected themſelves into my " judges."—And he *pledges himſelf* " to " impreſs *indelible infamy* on the very fore- " heads of that *mob* which has dared to a- " buſe him." Through thirty pages this author has laboured on in the ſame deli- cate vein of wit and ſatire;

" As when a dab-chick waddles thro' the copſe
" On feet and wings, and flies, and wades, and
" hops."

But, after all, he has only ſtirred the dunghill, and made it ſmell more nauſeous.

I happened to be one of the *oxen* that gave my opinion againſt this farce in the Theatre, at which time I did not know who wrote it. I repeated that opinion in a letter to you; and I think the author has now convinced the public, that the ſentence they pronounced in the Theatre muſt be affirmed in the cloſet. But I aſ-

ſure Mr R. H. that in forming *my* opinion when I read his piece, his important diſcovery that I am a *candle ſnuffer* in the playhouſe had no weight on my judgment.

I have not indeed the vanity to think, as he does, that I am an *original*, beholden to nothing but my own invention: I never was, like this reverend and pious author, "ſtruck with horror" at the *unprincipled* tragedy of *Douglas*, nor can I yet diſcover the exquiſite moral tendency of "News from Camperdown"—theſe are qualifications reſerved for a "*true ge-*
"*nius*, againſt whom all the *dunces* league
"in confederacy."

Were it not that Mr R. H. has ſaved me the trouble by printing his performance, and proved it to be an untimely abortion, the offſpring of pert *indecency*

and time-ſerving *cunning*, I would, without much trouble, vindicate the public as well as my own opinion; but as this taſk is unneceſſary, I ſhall favour the world with a ſpecimen or two of the poetry of this *nightingale*, ſo cruelly aſſailed by the *owls* who grace the Theatre of Edinburgh; and this I do, merely becauſe he plumes himſelf ſo much upon it, and *expects* it "will obtain "the high approbation of the candid and "judicious."——Now,

"Silence ye wolves, while Bob to Cynthia howls,
"Making night hideous."———

One of theſe Mr H. diſtinguiſhes as "*waggiſhly gay and humorous.*"—Taſte it and try, good reader.--

"Would you toy with a ſmiling laſs,
"Why, ſpeak to M'Coul the cawdie;
"And if you would ſend a billet-deaux,
"Oh! ſend it by your truſty cawdie.

" Your honour's ſervant at command,
" Your ready truſty cawdie,
" Will do your bidding better far
" Than liveryman ſo gawdy."

I have heard of Poets who ſacrifice *ſenſe* to *rhyme;* but if there is either ſenſe or rhyme, or gaiety, or humour, in this, " then am I a brewer's horſe."

Another he ſtiles a " *plaintive ballad,*" and miſerable " hymning Tyburn's ele- " giac lines" they are.—But try them alſo:—

" *They* bore her back: to ſoothe her grief
" With tendereſt cares *we* try,
" In vain; her boſom loath'd relief,
" She, anxious, pray'd to die.

" *She died!* poor maid! within *theſe* arms
" *She died,* of love-lorn woe!
" Or truer love, or fairer charms,
" Sweet Kilda ne'er ſhall ſhow."

Now, can any one ſay the author of this is not a *nightingale?* Had he ſung thus to his St. Kilda maiden *Jeanie*, who could have wondered if

" The Highland laſs forgot her want of reſt,
" Sunk pleas'd, though hungry, on her Bobby's
" breaſt?"

But I am weary of ſuch traſh: and although I admire the petulant vivacity with which this blockhead ſpatters his political dirt, on men at whoſe nod or ſmile he would change ſhapes like Proteus; yet, as all I can ſay of him has been already ſaid of ſuch another genius as our reverend author, and with a trifling variation ſuits him exactly, I ſhall tranſcribe it.

" Should H —— publiſh you had ſtabb'd your
" brother,
" Lampoon'd your monarch, or debauch'd your
" mother;

" Say, what revenge on H—— could be had ?
" Too dull for laughter, for reply too mad ;
" On one ſo poor you cannot take the law ;
" On ſuch a ——— none his ſword would draw ;
" Uncag'd, then, let the harmleſs monſter tear,
" Secure in dulneſs, madneſs, want, and fear !"

As this may probably *ſell* a ſecond edition of his book, I think Mr R. H. will be pleaſed by my bringing him into notice, though I am reſolved againſt a paper war with him, and wiſh him and his farce " all the ſucceſs they deſerve."

I am, &c.

EDIN. 24th April. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

JEALOUS WIFE.

SIR,

MR KEMBLE having advertiſed that he had engaged " three London Perform- " ers at one time, at a very heavy ex-

" pence, as a grateful remembrance of " paſt indulgences," none of whom had ever appeared here before, I went to the Theatre on Monday, and found that two of the three were our old acquaintances, Mr Knight and Miſs Farren (now his wife), both well known upon the Edinburgh ſtage, having performed here during the years 1781 and 1782. I do not mention this as any reflection on theſe Performers, but as ſhowing how *candid* the Manager is in the account of his Company, not to ſpeak of his art in *puffing* to reimburſe him of his " heavy expences."

The play was the JEALOUS WIFE, which is univerſally allowed to be an excellent comedy. The dialogue is eaſy, natural, and well adapted to the characters, and the cataſtrophe is highly gratifying to every ſuſceptible mind.

OAKLEY, is a gentleman fond of domeſtic life, poſſeſſes a good heart, and wiſhes to make others happy as well as himſelf. To be tormented, then, with his wife's teazing jealouſies, muſt be doubly diſtreſſing to him. Mr Woods's figure is rather *petit* for the ſtruggle in the laſt act, when oppoſed to ſo furious a ſpouſe as he had on this occaſion.—But every body muſt admit, that his deportment was juſt, and his action chaſte, through the whole of the character.

Mr Kemble's performance of Major OAKLEY, though not deſpicable, was dull and inſipid—

" From hollow cheſt the low ſepulchral note
" Unwilling heav'd, and ſtruggl'd in his throat."

Lord TRINKET, Mr Melvin—execrable —" 'pon honour."

Though Sir HARRY BEAGLE has not an idea beyond his dogs and his horſes, Mr Knight's repreſentation of him gave much pleaſure.—His figure, if not perfectly genteel, is manly, his countenance expreſſive, his voice is clear, and his action in character, avoiding every thing like ſtage trick, or out of nature. I have not ſeen an actor more improved than this performer ſince his laſt engagement here.

Mr Rock, in Captain O'CUTTER, was indeed *at home*. He gave the true dialect and ſpirit of the character, without buffoonery.

Mrs Mattocks, I have often heard, is a good actreſs in a certain line; and her efforts on Monday, although not ſuited to the part ſhe then appeared in, gave evident proof of what ſhe can do in her pro-

per walk. But I am amazed that, poſſeſſing ſo much experience as ſhe muſt do, ſhe could ſo far miſtake her abilities as to attempt Mrs OAKLEY here. She is either ignorant of her own *forte*, or ſhe muſt imagine the Edinburgh audience never ſaw a good performer in the part. The character is a ſhadow-hunter, no doubt, and is drawn as fooliſhly jealous—but ſhe is a lady of faſhion, and has the manners of a perſon of rank. Mrs Mattocks rendered her a complete ſcold, ready to knock her huſband down, and every other body in the houſe. Her beſt ſcene was her interview with Lady Freelove; but even there ſhe over-acted the ſelf-tormenting female ſhe perſonated; and I do not think ſhe comprehended her author in the ſcene where her huſband propoſes that Harriet ſhould come and ſtay in their houſe. I hope when next I ſee this lady I

ſhall have more room for praiſe—it will give me pleaſure—and ſhe "will excuſe "me" for my opinion of her Jealous Wife, which I would fain hope was not *her* choice for a firſt appearance in this city.

Lady FREELOVE is an unpleaſant part, and was as unpleaſantly performed by Miſs Biggs, who is totally unfit for that line of acting.

Upon the whole, the play went off very heavily, every thing that was well done in it having been marred by the wretched performance of Lord Trinket, Harriet, and Charles.

I am, &c.

EDIN. 5th July. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

CONSCIOUS LOVERS.

SIR,

ON Friday was performed The Conscious Lovers, in which Mrs Mattocks played Phillis, and I do think ſhe appeared in all her glory. It is in the ſmart Chambermaids, theſe ſecond-hand ladies of faſhion, that this actreſs excels. Her Phillis was very entertaining—it was performed with much ſpirit, volubility, and great art; but the moſt candid and experienced critic muſt own that ſhe heightened the character far beyond nature, indeed to a caricature—and

" Her bluſh was guiltineſs, not modeſty."

Tom is one of the beſt drawn coxcombs of the party-coloured corps: The outlines are natural, and the finiſhing capital. Mr

Knight had ſufficient vivacity; and the pert delivery requiſite for the character ſeemed to him "a property of eaſineſs," carefully avoiding grimace, his motions and attitudes proceeding from what Dr. Johnſon calls ſpontaneity.

MYRTLE does not call for great abilities, yet he rather wants aſſiſtance from than gives it the actor; his principles are good, but his temper is warm. Mr Woods would have given much ſatisfaction in the part, if he had had a little more variety in his deportment, which is neceſſary in the different ſhapes he aſſumes.

The ludicrous ſententious CYMBERTON was well performed by Rock, who happily took the medium road 'twixt luxuriance and inſipidity.

Mr Kemble preached SEALAND, particularly when Indiana is diſcovered to be his long loſt daughter, as

——— " If the midnight bell
" Did with his iron tongue and brazen mouth,
" Sound One unto the drowſy race of night."

YOUNG BEVIL is generous, coolly brave, a diſintereſted lover, a dutiful ſon, and a ſincere friend. What ſhall I then ſay of a manager who dares, in the face of common ſenſe, in contradiction of every rule of propriety, ſet on ſuch a man as Bew for this character—a man whom nature never deſigned to tread a ſtage in the moſt inſignificant village? Even his dreſs, which is deſcribed as being " the *ſplendid* covering of ſorrow," was not good enough for his valet. Criticiſm cannot deſcend to particulars where *all* is fault. If I ſhall be told that there was no other perſon in the com-

pany to fill up the part, I would aſk, *why have we not* a performer capable for Young Bevil? The Manager has lately told us, that there never was ſo ſucceſsful a theatrical campaign in this city as he had ſince his opening in January laſt; and will he, notwithſtanding, ſtill ſay we have no right to ſee a man in his company fit to play ſuch parts? If he does ſo, and the Edinburgh audience puts up with ſuch uſage, certain I am that they deſerve every other indignity he can ſhow them.—This is "*gratitude* for paſt indulgences" with a witneſs.

I am, &c.

EDIN. 12th July. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS.

SIR,

MR KNIGHT and Mrs Mattocks could not have hit on a play better ſuited to ſhow their abilities, than the CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS—Jacob and Bridget have been ſeldom ſo well ſupported here.—Knight juſtly pourtrayed the part of GAWKEY, in appearance, voice, and utterance; and I certainly have not heard the Somerſetſhire dialect ſo naturally pronounced, unleſs I call to memory our old friend, Dick Johnſon; to whom, in this line, I have not yet found an equal.

Mrs Mattocks, in BRIDGET, was very entertaining. The awkward attempts of an ignorant, aſſuming maid ſervant, to imitate her ſuperiors, were happily exe-

cuted: Her addreſs, when ſhe puts on her lady's clothes, was exactly ſuch as muſt have been the manners of any ſilly female ſo ſituated: But ſhe rather went over Nature's fence, when the ſlaves laid hold of her, to carry her to a nunnery—there ſhe, both in ſound and action, made too much of the character. This over-doing, "tho' it makes the unſkilful laugh, "cannot but make the judicious grieve."

Melvin, in WOODVILLE, was ſuch, that, had he not been the hero of the piece, I ſhould, in pity, have paſſed him over. His performance of the part excited general wonder, how the poor fellow came to be thruſt ſo miſerably out of place; and proved, to demonſtration, that

"No flame from Nature ever yet he caught,
"Nor knew a feeling which he was not taught."

Mr Woods was as reſpectable in Old GREY as the part could admit of.

The farce was the CRITIC; the firſt act of which abounds with ſo much genuine wit and ſatire, that it is always a favourite. I have ſeen King, the original *Puff*, and many others, in the part, who deſerved puffs, both direct and oblique; but I have not ſeen any performer (the original excepted) who pleaſed me better, in this character, than Mr Knight: The neceſſary rapidity of ſpeech, force in expreſſion, yet eaſy deportment, were perfectly at his command. I am ſorry he has now taken his leave of us; and muſt repeat, that I never ſaw an actor more improved than he is; which ſhows what can be done by perſeverance and induſtry.

"Where he falls ſhort, 'tis Nature's fault alone;
"Where he ſucceeds, the merit's all his own."

Rock's Sir Fretful Plagiary, tho' not ſo rich as Wilſon's, was performed with decent ſpirit and humour. If I may be allowed the expreſſion, he was *rather* chaſte; but, in that particular, I am ſure little Tony may improve.

I have hitherto been ſilent as to Mrs Knight, who is a ſmart, lively actreſs, and has improved as much in proportion as her huſband, ſince ſhe was laſt here. I have ſeen her, in the courſe of this viſit, play Little Pickle and Tilburina. The latter conſiſts only in extravagance, noiſe, and bombaſt, which ſhe ſeemed to execute well enough; but her Spoil'd Child was excellent. She muſt be a conſiderable acquiſition to any theatre, for the Romp, the Country Girl, Miſs Hoyden, &c.

The after ſeaſon being now cloſed, I

cannot omit putting Mr Kemble in mind of his promiſe to repair the houſe. I think it was at the end of laſt winter ſeaſon I read it; and, Heaven knows, there would be little thanks due to him, altho' he had fulfilled it; becauſe, laying embelliſhment out of the queſtion (which I do not expect from a frugal manager, in theſe days of ſcarcity), the hands of the carpenter are abſolutely neceſſary, to prevent the winds of Heaven from viſiting the audience too roughly. Repairs, to this extent, muſt be made; otherwiſe the houſe will go into ruin; and, conſequently, the manager's golden proſpects will be blaſted: But I wiſh, that, by protracting it too long, he may not occaſion much more loſs to himſelf than he would have ſuſtained, by a little well-timed expenditure.

If Pope, during the races, ſhould en-

act Hamlet, he may, by pointing at the roof, which I have ſeen "majeſtical, and "fretted with golden fires," make a tenfold impreſſion on the audience, in repeating the lines—

"Imperial Cæſar, dead, and turn'd to clay,
"Might ſtop a *hole*, to keep the *wind* away."

Mr Kemble, perhaps, thinks *ventilators* neceſſary for the health of the audience, during the ſummer months; and prefers natural to artificial ones. He, therefore, poſſibly reſerves his operations till next winter; when, doubtleſs, we will at leaſt be protected from the effects of froſt and ſnow, if not reminded of the former extravagance of painting the houſe, previous to its opening.

"Thrift, thrift, Horatio!"

I am, &c.

EDIN. 14th July. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

ROMEO AND JULIET.

SIR,

I HAVE often had much pleaſure from the repreſentation of ROMEO AND JULIET; not becauſe I have, in my time, been "run "through the ear with a love ſong," or "ſhot to the heart with a white wench's "black eye;" but becauſe I think that Shakeſpeare's wit and fancy ſhine moſt conſpicuous in Mercutio, and that Romeo and Juliet are the beſt-finiſhed lovers in the whole drama.

On Monday Mr and Mrs Pope played the hero and heroine of this tragedy; and as I have been ſo often obliged to diſapprove, it gives me pleaſure to have an opportunity of beſtowing praiſe. This couple ſeem, by nature, formed to perſonate that

ill-fated pair.—Mr Pope has a genteel, graceful figure; his voice is clear, melodious, and extenſive; and his action is juſt. If I was to find fault with any thing he did, it would be with his performance in the garden ſcene in the ſecond act, where he certainly was not ſo much enraptured with his Juliet as Romeo ſhould be: But for this I readily admit two cauſes—Juliet was placed too near the floor, which deſtroyed ſtage effect—and OUR Romeo has been ſix months married. Mr Pope went through the ſcene with the Friar admirably: His diſtreſs on his baniſhment, and his diſtraction at being compelled to leave his Juliet, for whom alone he wiſhed to live, were depicted finely: His emotion, on quitting Verona, was pathetic: In the dying ſcene, his voice and manner thrilled the heart of every auditor; and there was ſcarce an eye that was not filled with the tear of

pity and ſympathetic anguiſh.—Mr Pope is very much improved ſince he was here laſt.

Had Shakeſpeare himſelf choſen a Juliet, or had Shakeſpeare been capable of making a repreſentative of his Juliet, I am convinced, that, in beauty, elegance of demeanour, and apparent ſenſibility, he would have choſen, or created, Mrs Pope. Her countenance is expreſſion itſelf; her figure, every thing the author could have wiſhed; and her voice is comprehenſive and muſical. To go through her excellencies in the part, would paſs all bounds; but I muſt not omit theſe lines—

———" Do not ſwear at all;
" Or, if thou wilt, ſwear by thy gracious ſelf,
" Which is the god of my idolatry,
" And I'll believe thee."

Theſe were beyond deſcription, exquiſite.

Her anxiety, when the tedious narrative of the nurſe keeps her in ſuſpenſe,—her repetition of—

" Upon his brow Shame is aſham'd to ſit;
" For 'tis a throne where Honour may be crown'd
" Sole monarch of the univerſal earth,"—

her parting with Romeo going into baniſhment,—and her performance in the laſt ſcene of this " eventful hiſtory,"—aſſured us, that when Nature formed her perſon, ſhe did not overlook her mind.

I need hardly ſay any thing more of the wretched ſtate of the houſe. The Manager wiſhes, I ſuppoſe, to *inure* us to " this " moſt excellent canopy, the *air*,"—and that " goodly frame, the *earth*."

I am, &c.

EDIN. 25th July. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

GAMESTER.

SIR,

THE Author of the Tragedy of The GAMESTER, performed here on Saturday, has moſt impreſſively attacked one of the greateſt and moſt deſtructive evils that can prevail, though perhaps he has wrought up the piece with horror of *rather* a high colouring.

BEVERLY is moſt incomparably drawn to exemplify the fatal effects of that "infernal vice" of gaming—he is poſſeſſed of many virtues, which lead him to be unſuſpicious of thoſe villains he aſſociates with, and is reduced by their artifices to ſuch a weight of misfortunes, that he flies to ſuicide for relief: he has a variety of ra-

pid and violent tranſitions, which afford an actor fair opportunities of diſplaying capital powers to advantage. Pope in grief, rage, and diſtraction, equalled, if not excelled, any performer I have ſeen attempt the character—his voice and deportment were happily ſuited to the different diſtreſſing ſituations he is thrown into, and with ſuch irreſiſtible force, that in many places it may be ſaid "he towr'd above himſelf," particularly in the ſcene with Stukely, beginning "Whither would you lead me," where he was above meaſure torn 'twixt friendſhip and deſpair.—He

"Forc'd his ſoul ſo to his own conceit,
"That from her working all the viſage warm'd,
"Tears in his eyes, diſtraction in his aſpect,
"A broken voice, and his whole function ſuiting."

Mrs Beverly is one of the moſt amiable females repreſented on the ſtage—

Loving and affectionate in the extreme, poſſeſſing the greateſt ſtrength of mind, inſomuch that the ſharpeſt miſery, occaſioned by her huſband's imprudence, never diminiſhes her regard for him, or makes her reſolution forſake her;—from her expreſſions and ſentiments we ſhould be apt to ſuppoſe her of more experience than could reaſonably be expected to fill the mind of ſo delicate and youthful a performer as Mrs Pope—but,

"Before *ſuch* merit all diſtinctions fly."

—Her love, tenderneſs, and pitiable circumſtances, were given with ſuch *pathos*, ſuch evident torture of mind, and ſuch correct oral beauties, that panegyric itſelf would ſcarcely do her ſufficient juſtice. In the ſcene where Stukely informs her of his pretended brutal love, her anſwer was made with ſuch animation and dignified reſentment, that

——————" She ſhin'd,
" Darting pale luſtre, like the ſilver moon,
" Through the dark veil of rainy ſorrow."

The friendly, ſpirited, and generous LEWSON, and the deteſtable STUKELY were in the hands of Meſſrs. Melvin and Bew----Nay, do not laugh, Mr Editor----it was ſo, I aſſure you!

We have heard much of late of ſhort petticoats in the Opera houſe, though this is in ſome meaſure excuſable in *dancers*.—The lady who performed Charlotte on Saturday could not be found fault with in this particular, but there are *other* parts of female dreſs, which ought alſo to be her peculiar care, when appearing before ſo elegant an audience as in general graces the theatre of this metropolis.

By the way, Charlotte is a part not un-

worthy of a good actreſs, and I ſhould beg to know why Mrs Kemble did not perform it? I have always allowed her merit with pleaſure, and am at a loſs to account for her being inviſible of late: It cannot proceed from diſreſpect to the public.—Is it fear of putting herſelf in compariſon with Mrs Pope?—If ſo, it is perhaps natural, but it is unneceſſary, as her greateſt friends cannot put her in the ſcales with that performer. Why did ſhe not alſo play Alicia the other night? I have been informed that a little jealouſy of rivalſhip has prevented us from the pleaſure always afforded by the abilities of Miſs Gough.---I hope the report is groundleſs, and that *littleneſs* may never be truly aſcribed to a lady in Mrs Kemble's ſituation, and of her amiable character.

I am, &c.

EDIN. 30th July. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

PERCY.

SIR,

HAD the play of PERCY, performed on Tueſday, poſſeſſed more originality, the active buſineſs, and elevated ſentiments with which it abounds, would have entitled it to a more conſpicuous place in the Britiſh drama than it has hitherto maintained. The three leading characters are moſt intereſting, and many of the ſcenes require no common abilities to do them juſtice; but Miſs More has been ſo anxious to *tragedize*, that the fifth act, in ſome particulars, almoſt borders on burleſque; and there is a cloſe reſemblance betwixt this piece and the favourite play of our countryman Thomſon—Siffredi and Raby, Tancred and Percy, Oſmond and Douglas, as well as Sigiſmunda and

Elwina, are preciſely the ſame, both in ſentiment and incident.

The Douglas and the Percy are handed down to us as the moſt generous, as well as the braveſt foes—equally nice in honour, as courageous in the field; but the Author, having been born on the ſouth of the Tweed, rather inclines that way in drawing *her* Douglas. She no doubt has formed him high minded, valiant, and impatient of injury; but ſhe has alſo given him a tincture of revenge not of the moſt honourable kind, and nearly makes him commit a deed in the murder of Percy, when his priſoner and diſarmed, that would have blotted his name to all poſterity.

The character muſt be difficult to repreſent----perplexed in the extreme betwixt love for Elwina, and the oppoſite

feelings produced by conviction of her heart being Percy's, the moſt violent paſſions of mind, reſentment, jealouſy, honour, and revenge, are called forth. Mr Pope's figure is well adapted to the part ---his voice and gait alſo correſpond, and his climaxes were in general correct; but whether it was owing to the agitation of mind he behoved to ſhow from his entry to his exit, or to his having ſeldom played the part, he more than once made wrong pauſes, which deſtroyed the meaning of the paſſages he ſpoke.---This was ſeldom, I admit; and it may perhaps appear rather critical to take notice of it; but I do ſo with no view of depreciating this gentleman's merit, as either of the reaſons I have attributed it to are a ſufficient excuſe; and his performance, taken all in all, was moſt ſtriking and impreſſive.

Elwina is placed in a very arduous and heart-rending ſituation. She retains the ſtrongeſt regard for Percy; but being the wife of Douglas, ſhe is ruled by duty and honour inſtead of inclination.---This is a difficult taſk in a female breaſt, warmly attached, while at ſame time obliged to bear her huſband's bittereſt reproaches. Mrs Pope was every thing which it is poſſible for the mind to figure of Elwina---the very mould and image of the character in youth, beauty, and action, nor have I ſeen a better performed ſcene than where ſhe inſiſts on Percy's leaving her for ever. ---She ſeems formed

" To melt the heart with ſympathetic woe—
" Awake the ſigh, and teach the tear to flow;
" To put on frenzy's wild diſtracted glare,
" And freeze the ſoul wiih horror and deſpair."

A clown at a puppet ſhow, and a fel-

low who can mouth and rant in a theatre, are equally ſure of applauſe from the unthinking herd---and this was the caſe with Melvin in Percy: he did not give one unnatural twiſt of his body, nor did he once *bray* forth louder than uſual, but ſome *brother* in the upper regions gave the ſignal of applauſe to the groundlings, by which "the old timbers of this execrable "dungeon" no doubt ſuffered materially. To waſte paper with particulars of *this Percy* would be abſurd---one line comprehends the whole---

"'Twas chatt'ring, grinning, mouthing, jabb'ring
"all."

I am, &c.

EDIN. 2d. Aug. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

MACBETH—ORPHAN.

SIR,

HAVING twice thrown out ſome obſervations on the performance of MACBETH, ſince I became your correſpondent, I ſhould not now reſume the ſubject, but that I cannot prevail upon myſelf to overlook Mr and Mrs Pope in the characters of MACBETH and his Lady.

We all know, that though Garrick was perhaps the beſt Lear that ever appeared, he could not play Scrub even to pleaſe himſelf; and though he held the unrivalled poſſeſſion of Richard, his Lord Foppington would have been contemptible.--- In the ſame manner, though Pope and his wife are not equal to what I have ſeen in the uſurping tyrant and his undaunted

ſpouſe, that does not detract from their excellence in another line.---I do not mean to ſay that their performance on Thurſday was unworthy of notice, but only that, though moſt reſpectable, it did not come up to what I have ſeen in other parts.

Mr Pope has a martial-like figure; and his well-toned extenſive voice aided his performance much. When he enters after the murder, and alſo in the banquet ſcene, he was ſufficiently agitated, but his features were defective both there and in the ſoliloquy on the imaginary dagger;--- where rage and paſſion, inſtead of emotion of mind, were requiſite, he appeared to moſt advantage.

Mrs Pope's Lady MACBETH was given with dignity and effect.---She ſhowed much energy and boldneſs when ſhe ſeized the daggers from Macbeth; and her treat-

ment of his horror at the murder of Duncan was much in character. In the ſleeping ſcene ſhe moſt naturally evinced, to every eye and ear, the dreadful ſtate of a troubled mind. Conſidering that her juvenile and prepoſſeſſing appearance gave the lie to almoſt every ſentiment ſhe uttered, her performance was entitled to much credit.

I have often ſeen Mr Woods with pleaſure in MACDUFF, but on this occaſion he outdid himſelf.---When he hears the news of his wife and children's murder, he ſhowed much ſenſibility; and I never heard theſe lines ſo well ſpoken, which are in anſwer to Malcolm's deſire that he ſhould endure his fate as a man---

" I ſhall do ſo;
" But I muſt alſo feel it as a man:—
" I cannot but remember ſuch things were."

As our Theatre was ſo ſoon to cloſe, I alſo went on Friday to ſee the ORPHAN.

Though Otway once paid a high compliment to Shakeſpeare, by copying into his Caius Marius ſeveral ſcenes from Romeo and Juliet, yet none will deny that he was peculiarly happy in the true pathos;---his verſification is the moſt unaffected and natural for dialogue of any I know; and though his only living pieces (Venice Preſerv'd and The Orphan) are allowed on all hands to be void of moral, yet ſuch was his power over the paſſions, that no theatrical exhibition is more ſucceſsful in repreſentation than theſe plays; nor are there any which awaken our feelings, and ſo cloſely poſſeſs our attention, during their performance.

CASTALIO is diſtinguiſhed by a doat-

ing, amorous diſpoſition; but his want of confidence in his brother, cauſes all the diſtreſs that happens. To Polydore he acts evaſively, and to the object of his deſires he is both a fool and a tyrant;—his circumſtances require great abilities in the actor, and Mr Pope was fully adequate to the taſk;—his exultation, love, and tenderneſs, in theſe lines, after Monimia's reconciliation to him at the end of the ſecond act,

" Sure framing thee Heav'n took unuſual care,
" As its own beauty it deſign'd thee fair,
" And form'd thee by the beſt lov'd angel
" there,"

juſtly obtained the warmeſt burſts of applauſe that an overflowing houſe could beſtow. In the famous ſpeech beginning,

" I'd leave the world for him that hates a woman,"

he had great variety of tones and accents well applied, carefully avoiding the unna-

tural ranting frequently thrown into this "whirlwind of the ſoul;" and his exertions in the laſt act bid defiance to the niceſt criticiſm.

Monimia is an eſtimable character, ſtrongly and conſtantly attached to Caſtalio, the lord of all her wiſhes, and the ſource of all her miſeries.—As an actreſs in this part I may, without exaggeration, give Mrs Pope Caſtalio's compliment, that ſhe is

——"Nature's whole perfection in one piece."

—Her voice is "a concord of ſweet "ſounds."---In all her ſituations, which are diſtreſſing beyond deſcription, every feature pronounced the ſentiment of her heart.---Her exceſs of grief and ſorrow when ſhe diſcovers Polydore's deception, and her manner of repeating---

"Wouldſt thou again have me betray thy brother,
"And bring pollution to his arms?"

was piercingly excellent; and her dying ſcene was agonizing melody.

CHAMONT is an affectionate brother and a true friend, but is madly

" Jealous of honour, ſudden and quick in quarrel."

---Mr Woods's knowledge of the young ſoldier cannot be queſtioned;---the calmer paſſages he delivered with much ſenſibility, but his tranſitions to the impetuous ones wanted fire, and that quickneſs of geſture neceſſary for this " hot-brain'd, boiſ- " terous, noiſy" part.---His deſcription of the wrinkled hag was given with conſiderable merit.

And now, Mr Editor, as this theatrical ſeaſon is finiſhed, I muſt for the preſent bid you, and all the ſons and daughters of the *ſock* and *buſkin*, a hearty farewel. Hitherto I have ſtudied,

" 'Twixt two extremes with nicety to ſteer,
" Not over mild—not rigidly ſevere."

and when next we meet, if ever that ſhall happen, I wiſh (whatever my expectations are) that there may be fewer objects for cenſure, and more for praiſe.

I am, &c.

EDIN. 6th Aug. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

FAIR PENITENT—MOURNING BRIDE.

SIR,

THOUGH it is now a conſiderable time ſince I troubled you with any of my obſervations, my wiſh for the ſucceſs of theatrical amuſements has by no means abated, nor have I leſs opportunity of attending to them than formerly; but when I

found a total neglect of all propriety that ought to be obſerved in a Theatre Royal perſiſted in, criticiſm, at beſt painful and irkſome, became alſo unavailing, and I therefore determined for a time to renounce the ſubject. Now that the audience ſeem to have become ſenſible of the treatment they receive, and manifeſt their opinion by the groans and hiſſes with which the performance is interrupted every night, and by addreſſing the editors of other newſpapers, I am encouraged to renew my correſpondence; ſenſible that it is only by the united voice of the Public we can expect to ſee the Theatre reſtored to the ſame reſpectable ſituation in which it was placed till within theſe few years.

At the commencement of the ſeaſon in January, there was, as uſual, puffed away a liſt of the Performers, "at the

" very head and front" of which was Mr H. Siddons.

" So ſome cockſparrow in a farmer's yard
" Hops at the head of an huge flock of turkeys."

In ſpring, when the Hero of Drury-lane *favoured us* with a few nights performance, at a time he could not be employed in London, Miſs Kemble was popp'd on as Lady Macbeth, the Queen in Hamlet! &c.

Theſe, and ſimilar *favours*, prevented me from troubling the Theatre with my preſence, or you with my ſtrictures--- While the very groundlings continue to be vomited upon us from the over-crammed ſtomachs of every provincial theatre in the three kingdoms, without meeting the *return* ſuch conduct deſerves,

———" Hide for ſhame,

" Edina's ſons, your graudſires images,
" For fear their ſouls ſhould animate their marbles,
" To bluſh at their degenerate progeny."

Mrs Siddons's well-known, unrivalled excellence, will always get the better of every drawback, and induced me to ſee her CALISTA in the FAIR PENITENT on Saturday.

Extenſive powers are neceſſary to do the part juſtice, and ſhe had every qualification requiſite;---her haughty demeanour to Horatio where ſhe tears the letter, her exquiſite diſtreſs in the ſcene, when Lothario and ſhe are diſcovered by her huſband, and her horror and deſpair in the laſt act, far ſurpaſſed any other actreſs I ever ſaw attempt this reluctant penitent, having, throughout the performance,

" So charm'd all hearts, that gazing crowds

" Stood on tiptoe, panting, wanting breath,
" To give their welcome voice."

I have formerly mentioned Mr Woods in SCIOLTO :---The character has been in much worſe hands; but his *forte* does not lie in the tranſitions of countenance, breaks in expreſſion, and parental grief, ſo neceſſary for this old unhappy Genoeſe.

The Manager uſed to mount HORATIO, which was unqueſtionably one of the beſt parts he ever ſtilted; but now, it ſeems, he is above the character.---He may take my word, however, that his nephew, Mr Siddons, will gain in the public eſtimation of his good ſenſe, by declining for the future to perſonate Altamont's officious friend.

The appearance made by Mr Bew in " the haughty, gallant, gay LOTHARIO,"

bore that kind of *entertaining* reſemblance to the character he performed which Mr Pope happily deſcribes by the expreſſion of "Similies unlike."—Since it was reſolved to make this libertine a *military* perſonage, and the wardrobe could only furniſh him with Gibbet's coat, Horatio, "for charity's dear ſake," ſhould ſurely have omitted thoſe parts of his reproofs which mention his *dreſs* and *fine form*.

Knowing the abilities of Mrs Siddons in ZARA in the MOURNING BRIDE, I went on Monday to ſee her in that part alſo. She is no doubt great in every thing ſhe does, but ſhe exceeded my utmoſt expectations in this royal priſoner, nor do I think there ever was a more correct repreſentation on the ſtage. She has that dignified, majeſtic appearance, that elegant commanding deportment, that expreſſive

countenance, that eloquent manner, that powerful voice and utterance, which Congreve evidently intended his captive Queen ſhould poſſeſs—the whirlwinds of paſſion, and climaxes of rage and fury, when ſhe diſcovers Oſmyn and Almeria in conference, in the third act, were ſo admirably and ſo forcibly expreſſed, that the audience juſtly teſtified their approbation and aſtoniſhment by five repeated burſts of applauſe: Her tremulous, broken voice, and horror-ſtruck features, after drinking the poiſon, chill'd the heart of every ſpectator—but indeed her whole performance was amazing, and fully juſtified the opinion of a well-known author,

" Oh jealouſy! each other paſſion's calm
" To thee, thou *conflagration* of the ſoul."

Mr Woods ſpoke Osmyn with pro-

priety, but is deficient both in figure and voice for this heroic Moor.

Miſs Kemble might have paſs'd in ALMERIA's confidante, but it was cruel to murder the poor Princeſs before the eyes of a full Theatre.

Puff's Tragedians never created more laughter than Smith, Venables, and the reſt of the troop, occaſioned by their performance in this tragedy. But let no cruſty critic "mock their miſeries" by entering on detail.

I am, &c.

24th July, 1799. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

MACBETH---DISTRESSED MOTHER.

SIR,

I MENTIONED in my laſt that I was encouraged to renew my correſpondence, by the public having ſhown their ſenſe of the degraded ſituation to which their favourite amuſement has of late years been reduced; but as the extent of that degradation may not be ſufficiently attended to, I beg leave, in continuation of what I did laſt year, to ſhow the ſtate of the Company in 1789, and, contraſting it with the aſſemblage of "ſhreds and patches" in 1799, put the queſtion

——"Who, that hath judgment,
"Would ſtep from this to this?"

In 1789 the principal performers were

Meſſrs.	King,	Miſs	George,
	Holman,		Hughes,
	Wilſon,	Mrs	Beresford,
	Woods,		Charteris,
	Williamſon,		Sparks,
	Archer,		Jackſon.
	Moſs,		
	Bell, and		
	Bland as Harlequin.		

and in the Summer we had Mrs Jordan for the third time.

In 1799, I aſk any impartial perſon, if there was a name worth mentioning, or an actor in the Company, who ought to be ſuffered on the boards of a Theatre Royal, but Mr Woods, Rock, and Mrs Kemble —we have, to be ſure, had flying viſits of John Kemble and Mrs Siddons at different times, and we are (it ſeems) to have another of Incledon; but as to their *ſup-*

porters, except the names I have mentioned,

" Equal their merits, equal is their din."

Miſerable as the contraſt is, I again went to ſee Mrs Siddons in Lady MACBETH on Thurſday. She needs no praiſe of mine, and panegyric on her muſt now be almoſt ſtale—I cannot, however, refrain from noticing, that her manner of repeating theſe lines

———" Hark! I laid the daggers ready,
" He could not miſs 'em—Had he not reſembled
" My father as he ſlept, I had done't."

gave dreadful note of her " undaunted metal"—and her ſleeping ſcene was a real picture of the " written troubles of the " brain."

I am perſuaded that this daughter of Melpomene appeared in that deteſtable fe-

male more with the view of introducing her ſon in the " worthy Thane" than to ſhow her own talents—regard and partiality by a mother to a ſon is moſt natural and excuſable—but for Heaven's ſake let her not ſuppoſe that even *her* intereſt will cram this young man down the throats of the audience in Macbeth—he has not one requiſite as a principal, nor ſhould he paſs as a ſecond-rate actor---he might have been tolerated in Malcolm ;

" At beſt no more, even if he ſpeaks the truth."

The Performer who does juſtice to this Uſurper muſt poſſeſs a figure fit to be a Tyrant, a comprehenſive voice, an expreſſive countenance, and vigorous action, none of which have fallen to the lot of Mr Siddons.---The *Gooſe* had almoſt overwhelmed his imaginary dagger---his entry after the murder was placidity itſelf, inſtead of the ſtrongeſt agitation which can

fill the human mind; and through the whole of the ſcene, it was obvious that he did not even underſtand the remorſe and alarm intended by the author—He was pitifully mechanical in the banquet ſcene; and, in the laſt act,

——" Fury ſhook his fabric like an earthquake:
" He heav'd for vent, and burſt like bellowing
" Ætna,
" In ſounds ſcarce human."

Mr Woods was well received in MACDUFF, as uſual. His attention to every thing, renders him always impreſſive and intereſting; but, leſt I ſhould incur the charge of tedioufneſs, I hope he will excuſe me for not being more minute in expreſſing the pleaſure I had from his repreſentation of the *firſt Earl* that Scotland ever rear'd.

Had *Bottom* the weaver been gratified with performing every other part in the Piece, there could not have been ſo much indecorum as was exhibited by the Bews, the Wildes, the Smiths, &c. in perſonating Banquo, Malcolm, and the Witches. Some of them did not know a word they had to ſay; ſome ſpoke for their neighbours as well as themſelves, ſome miſſed whole ſpeeches, and others were obliged to double, treble, and even quadruple characters!

On Friday Mrs Siddons "kindly undertook" to perform in the DISTRESSED MOTHER, for her ſon's benefit! This Play is critically regular, as to unity of time and place, but ſo much depends on the four characters of Pyrrhus, Oreſtes, Andromache, and Hermione, that it muſt be heavy on any audience, unleſs all theſe

Parts are ſupported by Performers of the firſt reſpectability.

Mr Woods's conception of PYRRHUS was extremely juſt, and his deportment manly, but (though the fault of nature only) he is certainly neither the Warrior nor the Lover.

In ORESTES Mr Siddons was

" Rude in ſpeech and manners;"

his love and declamation were uncouth; his grief the croaking of a raven; his action was extravagant; and, in his diſtracted ſcene,

————" a peal of groans
" Then followed, and a lamentable voice."

Mrs Kemble was the ANDROMACHE in which her feelings were pathetic, and her expreſſion adequate.

HERMIONE's violent affection to Pyrrhus, and the return ſhe meets with, give full ſcope for the diſplay of love, grief, fury, diſtraction, and every tragic attitude. Any one in the leaſt acquainted with the unequalled abilities of Mrs Siddons, muſt be ſatisfied that this Grecian princeſs could be no where ſo properly placed as with her. In many of the ſcenes her tones, looks, and attitudes were grand, and indeſcribably beautiful—

" Her eyes have power beyond Theſſalian charms.
" The ſea-green Syrens taught her voice their flat-
" tery:
" And, while ſhe ſpeaks, night ſteals upon the day
" Unmark'd of thoſe that hear."

Long may this Lady continue the pride of the Britiſh Stage; and when next ſhe viſits Edinburgh, I truſt we ſhall have ſuch

Comedians as we ought to have, and are entitled to tread the boards with her.

I am, &c.

EDIN. 29th July, 1799. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

BEGGARS OPERA.

SIR,

GAY never exerciſed his ſatyric pen ſo ſucceſsfully as in his BEGGARS OPERA, in which he completely laſhed the taſte that then prevailed for the Italian Opera—certainly ſuch compoſitions, particularly the *ſerious*, are a ſpecies of the Drama no way defenſible, and have juſtly been ſaid to put Nature out of countenance.

Mr Incledon, whoſe vocal powers have made no inconſiderable noiſe in the theatrical hemiſphere, appeared here on Satur-

day in MACHEATH----His greateſt admirers, I believe, do not hold him up as an actor, and I think they are right----but he ſeems to poſſeſs ſome animation, and cuſtom has rendered the Stage a property of tolerable eaſineſs to him----His voice is capacious and melodious---in all the ſongs he ſhowed a thorough knowledge of muſic, but he was peculiarly excellent in

" The charge is prepar'd," &c.

where he evinced the moſt capital taſte and wonderful execution.

Rock was very warmly received in PEACHUM, and happily hit off the dry cynical humour intended for the character.

I give Mrs Bew, who appeared as Mrs PEACHUM, credit for her modeſty, in omitting the ſong,

" Our Polly is a ſad ſlut,"

And we ſhould have been ſaved ſome diſagreeable ſenſations, if Miſs Biggs, in LUCY, had alſo ſpared ſome of her *warbling*.

A Mrs Atkins, from Covent Garden Theatre, play'd POLLY. If I miſtake not, this Lady made her *debut* in the Hay Market about two years ago. She is young and beautiful. Her voice is not very extenſive, but delicately muſical; her tones are bewitching, and her acting was accompanied with a ſenſibility of countenance and emphaſis which cannot fail to recommend her to a diſcerning audience.

" A Correſpondent" informed the Editor of another newſpaper in this city, on Thurſday, that Mr Incledon was the " favourite ſon of Apollo," and Mrs Atkins " the Syren of the age."--Theſe performers have ſeen that I am moſt willing to ſub-

ſcribe to their merits; but praiſe becomes ridicule, when laid on too thick; and let not this *diſintereſted* Correſpondent attempt to make us believe that the circumſtance of their being brought here, affords proof of "peculiar attention in the Manager, to "bring before the Edinburgh audience e-"very faſhionable entertainment that can "be procured."

Was it "peculiar attention to the audience," to ſplit his too wretched troop, and ſend the half of them a-ſtrolling into England, when he had not a ſingle creature who could ſpeak a line, except Mrs Siddons and Mr Woods? Was it, as he ſays, "a *bon bouche*," to ſee his Nephew, "that flower of modeſty," murder Macbeth in place of Duncan, and his ſiſter Almeira? Was it "procuring every faſhionable entertainment" to ſet on Bew in Lothario,

and Venables in Old Norval? Or, Was it adding to our amuſement to ſend Mrs Kemble to Glaſgow, when ſhe might have ſo ſtrongly ſupported the Operas now performing? But theſe, and other inſtances of the Manager's unbounded goodneſs, fully eſtabliſh that

" None but himſelf can be his parallel."

I am, &c.

EDIN. Aug. 5, 1799. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

DUENNA—INKLE AND YARICO—LIONEL AND CLARISSA.

SIR,

AMONG the " touches of ſweet harmony" which I attended laſt week, were the DUENNA and INKLE AND YARICO---- In the former, Incledon played CARLOS, and it is certainly enough to ſay, that his

Grammachree and *Highland Laddie*, if not ſo aſtoniſhing as Leoni's, were more pleaſing and agreeable to the ear.

I ſhould not mention Wilde in JEROME, but for the rank the character holds in the piece.----Why did not Rock ſhow us the "ſpark of youthful fire" incident to this part?

Scriven's JEW was poor indeed!---Even his ſong "Give Iſaac the nymph," the very words of which, in ordinary hands, compel laughter, paſſed with him in pitiful ſilence.

Mrs Atkins in CLARA received many juſt tributes of applauſe.

"She claim'd attention with the dulcet ſong!
"Each word, each ſound, *ad placitum*, controul
"And find a free admiſſion to the ſoul."

Though the Duenna did not abſolutely die with the *exit* of Mrs Webb, nor with the extruſion of Mrs Charteris (after twenty-three years faithful ſervice), yet the part has been in a deep conſumption ever ſince, and ſeems reduced to the laſt extremity in the perſon of Miſs Biggs.

INKLE AND YARICO abounds with abſurdities, but the dialogue is eaſy and ſpirited, the ſentiments are tolerably juſt, and often well applied.

Nothing can be made of INKLE, and I think it condeſcenſion in Mr Woods to appear in the character.

The blunt, honeſt, manly ſentiments of Sir CHRISTOPHER CURRY, would have been well expreſſed by Kemble, had he not

been too tragical; probably he approves of Sempronius's maxim---

———" Wouldſt thou be thought in earneſt,
" Clothe thy feign'd zeal in rage, in fire, in fury."

TRUDGE poſſeſſes much vivacity and pleaſantry, with very apt expreſſions, but Scriven marred the effect of the author's wit by giving all the jokes *to the audience*, and making an arch rogue of a faithful, honeſt ſervant.

CAMPLEY's ſongs, as well as others introduced, were moſt admirably ſung by Mr Incledon, ſeveral of them being warmly enchored:—And Mrs Kemble's YARICO, which has often been praiſed, never appeared to greater advantage than on this occaſion.

Mrs Atkins as NARCISSA, both in her

ſpeeches and ſongs, diſplayed ſo captivating a ſimplicity that it may well be ſaid ſhe is---

" When unadorn'd, adorn'd the moſt."

We have generally enough of Farce, without waiting the entertainment; but I could not reſiſt the POOR SOLDIER, and received much ſatisfaction from Incledon's PATRICK, notwithſtanding his omitting the beſt ſong in the character,

" Though Leixlip is proud of its cloſe ſhady bowers," &c.

Rock afforded great amuſement in FATHER LUKE,—and though it muſt be admitted that Mrs Baddely, who was our original NORAH, ſung to the heart as well as the ear, Mrs Atkins is an excellent ſubſtitute.

Bickerſtaff aſſerted that LIONEL AND CLARISSA, acted on Wedneſday, was his beſt performance. I do not think ſo, and I am ſure it has never been ranked as ſuch; yet it has always been deemed a good morſel in theatrical fare.

LIONEL's ſedate deportment did not ſit eaſy on Mr Incledon, but as uſual, in the ſongs, he was charming.

Mr Rock gained much applauſe in COLONEL OLDBOY; but I was ſorry to ſee him get a hurt in his leg, in the ſcene where he diſcovered that he had made a dupe of himſelf. This accident, of courſe, knocked up the beſt of his part, but it is to be hoped that the injury is not ſerious.

Kemble rolled on in SIR JOHN FLOWERDALE, which he ſpoke with judgment, and added much weight to the piece.

It would be the height of injuſtice to attack Scriven's JESSAMY, being convinced that the part muſt have been forced on him, as well as his *dreſs*, which was diſgracefully ſhabby.

Mrs Atkins looked and ſpoke CLARISSA moſt delightfully. The ſongs ſeemed as if compoſed for herſelf, in all of which

" Enchanting ſounds flow'd ſweetly from her tongue,
" And fond attention on each accent hung."

Perhaps I may be accuſed of repetition of ſentiment, in expreſſing my opinion of Mr Incledon and Mrs Atkins; but I think theſe performers ſo well deſerving of every eulogium, and the Manager ſo ſeldom favours me with an opportunity of ſpeaking in this ſtyle, that I cannot reſiſt it when it occurs.—I am, &c.

EDIN. Aug. 15, 1799. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

FOPS FORTUNE.

SIR,

OUR preſent Theatrical Seaſon was announced in a ſtyle of ſuch humility and deſpondency, as made me for ſome time waver whether I ſhould continue my ſtrictures or not. An elegant author of this country beautifully obſerves, that

" Pity is the firſt, the nobleſt paſſion in the human
" breaſt."

And this ſenſation dictated ſilence to me, when I could utter no eulogium. Who does not pity Romeo when that word " *baniſhment*" is pronounced againſt him? But, on the other hand, there is, with all this whining meanneſs, an arrogant pretenſion to merit, which, together with a recollection of the Manager's parſimonious conduct as caterer for the public taſte,

his illegitimate bantlings and incongruous medleys, *baniſhed* the idea of compaſſion, and made me reſolve ſtill to continue my correſpondence. At the ſame time, as "mercy ſhould always ſeaſon juſtice," I ſhall probably be rather ſparing of my remarks during the laſt campaign of this Theatrical Potentate. I hope he will acquire

"Philoſophy's ſweet milk to comfort him withal."

And he has in the mean time got ſome good Caledonian caſh, which, I am perſuaded, will be no bad ſubſtitute with him. I truſt his profeſſions of gratitude are ſincere, and not "cold hypocriſy's ſtale device," merely to pick up a little more.

Being anxious to ſee our preſent Company, in which were announced ſome new names, I went on Saturday to the Fops

FORTUNE, upon which I formerly gave you ſome remarks.

Mr Quick has had many very able predeceſſors in the part of DON LEWIS, and as its laſt repreſentative in this city, Mr Lee Lewes, was perhaps inferior to none of them, it became the more difficult to give it with glowing effect; but Mr Quick was fully maſter of the taſk:—he is evidently poſſeſſed of a rich vein of comic humour; and a more animated pourtray of teſty, choleric manners, joined to warmth of diſpoſition, and general whimſicality, could not have been diſplayed than by this comedian, who ſeems a

——— "hum'rous, odd, fantaſtic ſoul
"Without fineſſe, originally droll."

The volatility and ſilly ſprightlineſs of CLODIO were well conceived and judi-

ciouſly managed by Mr M'Cready; but, I imagine that his powers are more adapted to genteel comedy, than the caſt of fops. He has a handſome perſon, genteel deportment, an expreſſive countenance, and treads the ſtage with eaſe, therefore cannot fail to be a valuable acquiſition to any Theatre. He was elegantly dreſſed; and when I recollect the old, tawdry, durant ſuit in which the Manager obliged poor Melvin to expoſe himſelf to public ridicule in this character, I cannot help congratulating Mr M'Cready on his happier fate. I have no doubt that he furniſhes his own dreſſes, as I don't believe the wardrobe can ſhow any thing nearly ſo handſome as what he appeared in.

The reſerved, ſaturnine manner of Mr Woods muſt ever fit him for the ſedateneſs of CARLOS; and although he is, in

ſeveral ſituations, rather deficient in pathos, and expreſſion of ſenſibility, I think the man muſt be very difficult to pleaſe, who does not acknowledge he has much merit in this character.

Mr Rock was very happy in SANCHO; and ſince this faithful ſervant can be ſo repreſented as to produce entertainment to an audience, I ſee no propriety in his having been ſo long kept out of the hands of a good performer.

Miſs Perry looked extremely well in ANGELINA, but had little opportunity of ſhowing talents—She is young, and to a beautiful perſon unites elegance and propriety of manner. I can have little doubt, even from this ſpecimen, that ſhe is able to grace more important characters.

I believe that the leſs I ſay of the other performers the better, for in many reſpects our Theatre ſeems entitled to claim the palm in buffoonery; but ſince I have ſo often noticed the avarice and thrift of the Manager, I cannot avoid giving as an inſtance the cloak in which the nephew of the Governor of Liſbon made his appearance: We could diſcover that it had *once* been ſcarlet only from the large patches with which it has recently been loaded!— Not to ſpeak of *gratitude*, was this even decent, before the elegant and polite audience of Saturday? and I believe that, in theſe reſpects, there is *none* ſuperior to that of Edinburgh.

I am, &c.

EDIN. 10th Feb. 1800. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

DUENNA.

SIR,

THE pleaſure I received from Mr Quick's performance of Don Lewis induced me to go to his benefit on Monday laſt, on which occaſion the favourite Opera of the Duenna was brought forward.

I don't believe that if the whole Drama was ranſacked, there could be found a part more ſuited to Mr Quick than that of the Jew—his figure, manner, and voice, all concur to make it ſit eaſy on him, and to give to the auditors the moſt lively idea of the character meant to be exhibited—it was nature's image held up to the mind in the moſt ſtriking colours; and although there are very few who can be compared to our old and much lamented friend

O'Reilly in this part, I was as well pleaſed with Mr Quick's ISAAC as with his----To attempt an enumeration of his excellencies would be to mention every ſcene he appeared in; and I think I cannot do better than cordially aſſent to the lines,

" No ſooner Quick appears in public view,
" Than every word he ſpeaks diſplays the Jew."

Mr Rock was moſt deſervedly applauded in DON JEROME—indeed, he gave it with much higher luſtre than I thought he was capable of----and if we could make a bargain never to ſee it worſe done, we might agree never to aſk to ſee it better—the ſcenes between Quick and him, were moſt admirably calculated to drive away the ſpleen; and it may well be ſaid, that

——" He with juſtice ſtrict attention draws,
" Acts truly from himſelf, and gains applauſe."

Miſs Perry in Don Carlos diſplayed the moſt elegant breeches figure I ever ſaw ---ſhe is tall, ſtraight, and well proportioned, but I hope the part was not of her own choice—It requires no common abilities to ſhew the high pitch of muſical excellencies to which the ſongs may be carried; and although ſhe was ſweet enough, there was nothing very ſtriking in the execution.

In this play there are eight characters which require decent performers, and I am ſorry that every praiſe I can beſtow is fully exhauſted before I get half through with them. I mentioned in my laſt, that as mercy ſhould always ſeaſon juſtice, I would probably be ſparing in my remarks during this laſt ſeaſon of our preſent theatrical juggler, but I am ſatisfied that

" If I had tons of mercy, he deſerves none."

—Is there an eſtabliſhed company in the

three kingdoms that has not a finger in it except Edinburgh? which ſhould be ſuperior to all after London and Dublin.—Is this ſhewing that our elephantine Manager's ſucceſſors "cannot more anxiouſly "*deſire* to obtain the approbation of the "public."—Or that "the honourable pa-"tronage of Edinburgh has been *the pride* "*of his life?*" But I may well obſerve of him as Benvolio does of Mercutio; he "ſpeaks more in a minute than he will "ſtand to in a month."

Cook's mode of ſinging puts me in mind of an untuned baſs, or the great bell of a church unſkilfully managed—yet ſuch was our ANTONIO!

Egerton very wiſely did not attempt FERDINAND'S ſongs at all; and in the admired trio, "A bumper of good liquor,"

the old Roman method was adopted; for while Egerton ſtood before the audience, Cook's hollow ſounds were very diſtinctly heard behind the ſcenes!!!

CLARA, as given by Mrs Bramwell, might have pleaſed a perſon unacquainted with a better; but when I recollect a Billington, a Stuart, and many other diſtinguiſhed names in the part, you may be ſure that I was not much gratified. I think ſhe ſhewed much good ſenſe, and becoming diffidence, in omitting the celebrated ſong,

"Adieu! thou dreary pile," &c.

Mrs Kemble is much miſtaken in ſuppoſing herſelf ſuch a favourite here, that ſhe can do nothing wrong. She, to be ſure, takes care to have as few rivals as poſſible; but even that won't do—She can aſſume ſuch a ſimplicity of manner, and

rural appearance, that her chanting paſſes very well in Roſina; but there ſhe muſt ſtop with her vocal efforts—her LOUISA by no means reached mediocrity; and being much inferior to Mrs Bramwell's Clara, made that part go off better than it would have done.

The DUENNA was again put into the hands of Miſs Biggs!

I am, &c.

EDIN. 20th Feb. 1800. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

PIZARRO.

SIR,

THERE certainly never was a play which, with ſo little intrinſic merit, has attracted ſo much attention as PIZARRO: And although no man can admire Mr

Sheridan more than I do, or have a higher opinion of his dramatic powers, I think nothing can afford a more ſtriking proof that the public taſte is vitiated in theatrical, as well as in more important matters, than the ſucceſs this piece has met with. It would appear to me that there is at preſent a miſt ſurrounding the good ſenſe of the Britiſh nation, which prevents them exerciſing their own judgment, and makes them the dupes of dramatiſts, as well as politicians. I ſee nothing in this play which entitles it to rank with almoſt any one of our acting tragedies—indeed, except the priſon ſcene between Rolla and Alonzo, where there is a generous contention in friendſhip, there is ſcarcely any thing paſſing mediocrity. As a Biographer of Mr Sheridan has expreſſed ſentiments congenial to mine, and in better

language than I can do, I beg leave juſt to quote them. He ſays,—

'To gratify the public taſte by ſcenes 'of exquiſite ſenſibility, ſupported by in- 'cidents, ſometimes impoſſible, and in al- 'moſt every caſe improbable, and to 'ſtrengthen the exhibitions by the attrac- 'tions of ſtriking machinery, ſcenic gran- 'deur, and appropriate muſic, was evi- 'dently the object which he (Mr Sheri- 'dan) had in view by that ſtrange degra- 'dation of ſuperior talents. It would 'ſeem that Mr Sheridan had altogether 'forgotten he had written the Critic; for 'there are few ſcenes or paſſages in Pizar- 'ro which can eſcape the juſt ſatire and 'humorous ridicule contained in that 'production. He has indeed condeſcend- 'ed, in his alteration of the *death of Rolla*, 'to revive the character of the ingenious

'*Puff*; for the moſt prejudiced mind muſt 'feel how very pointedly Mr Sheridan's 'obſervations in the Critic apply to the fa- 'vourite tragedy of Pizarro'—"Now "then for my magnificence! my bottle! "my noiſe! and my proceſſion!—Smaller "things muſt give way to a ſtriking ſcene "at the opening; that's the rule; a play "is not to ſhow occurrences that happen "every day, but things juſt ſo ſtrange, "that though they never did, they might "happen." 'But the criticiſms of Mr 'Sheridan were no longer remembered '—found and ſhow triumphed over com- 'mon ſenſe.' The ſpeech of Rolla, exhorting the Peruvians to defend their king and country, is the only part of the work which has any claim to originality, and of this Mr Sheridan's Biographer ſays, 'The 'appeal to the people, in ſupport of their 'rights and national independence, is

'bold and animating. The ſtriking image 'of the vulture and the lamb is however 'uſed with more effect in his ſpeech on 'the impeachment of Mr Haſtings; but 'his right to borrow from himſelf cannot 'be queſtioned.' He concludes in theſe words: 'It is much to be lamented that 'he has, by this motely exhibition, de-'graded his reputation as the firſt drama-'tic writer of the country, and ſunk him-'ſelf to a level with the play-wrights of 'the day, to whom profit is every thing, 'and fame nothing.'

Since the ſucceſs of this play depended on the united efforts of the actor, the painter, the machiniſt, and even the ſcene-ſhifter, it will readily occur, to thoſe who have of late years attended the Theatre in this city, that it could have been no where more unfortunate, for

there is now no ſuch thing as uniſon in any performance here.

The character of PIZARRO is deteſtable. Want of courage is none of his failings, but he is capable of the meaneſt, and moſt diabolical actions to ſatisfy his ruling paſſions, cruelty and revenge. This part ſeems one of thoſe which might be ſuppoſed written for Mr Woods; with his uſual correctneſs of action he *look'd* and *ſpoke* the character admirably, without doing violence to his natural powers. When he dooms Alonzo to death, his ironical affectation of pity for his ſon, impreſſed the audience with a ſtronger idea of the unfeeling Tyrant, than all the invective which is poured out againſt him.

ROLLA though a character of no novelty in the drama, or heroic romance, is

nevertheleſs ſure of catching the audience and going off with *eclat*. He is a patriot, a warrior, and an uncommonly generous friend. An elegant manly figure, an expreſſive countenance, a full toned voice, and eaſe of action, are indiſpenſible requiſites for this part; *therefore* I ſuppoſe it was given to Mr Siddons, who is deficient in them all.

If noiſe is the meaſure of excellence, then never was actor ſuperior to Mr Siddons—it ſeems all one to him whether he is engaged in plain recitation, or addreſſing warriors in the field—where the words ſhould flow in a mild mellifluous tone, and the action be cool and dignified, he is equally noiſy, wild, and extravagant, as if in the maddeſt ſcene of Tancred, Lear, or Alexander.

" In all alike he roars, he bawls aloud,
" The ladies terrifies, and frights the crowd."

He has got a ſet of attitudes which, I dare ſay, he thinks very fine and ſtriking, but they only ſtruck me as aukward affectation.—His ſtart, ſtare, and convulſive agitation, caricature Tragedy; and by attempting uncommon excellence, he renders himſelf uncommonly ridiculous.

" See how he ſtalks about with aukward ſhow,
" His big heart ſwelling with imagin'd woe."

He has no voice for proper modulation, and the ears of the audience are conſtantly offended by the moſt irkſome diſſonance. He ſeemed to choak in delivering Rolla's famous ſpeech—in upbraiding the Peruvians for flying from battle, he was furious and inarticulate—while he aſſumed the habit of a monk, he retained the ex-

travagance of a bedlamite; and in delivering to Cora her child, his manner was ſo abſurd as to create univerſal laughter —even what might have been paſſable, was diſgraced by imitating his uncle; but he is the moſt unſucceſsful imitator I ever ſaw.

Alonzo is an endearing huſband, a general philanthropiſt, and a ſoldier. Mr M'Cready has a clear, diſtinct pronunciation, and he uttered every ſentence in an eaſy and impreſſive manner. I cannot ſuppoſe that he pretends to firſt-rate excellence in impaſſioned ſcenes, but I think him fit to repreſent Alonzo in any theatre in Britain—with the advantages of perſon, manner, utterance, and a complete knowledge of ſtage buſineſs, he can ſcarcely fail in giving ſatisfaction in this part. He ſhewed much feeling in the ſcene with Pi-

zarro, where the name of Cora is introduced to give him additional pangs.

ELVIRA is a ſingular character; a romantic admiration of heroiſm had ſo attached her to Pizarro, from the high name he had acquired in arms, that ſhe even deſerted her friends and ſacrificed her honour to him; but ſtill ſhe is the friend of ſuffering virtue; and being convinced of her paramour's crimes, becomes a principal agent in putting an end to them. The part is known to have been intended, in a great meaſure, for the incomparable acting of Mrs Siddons, whoſe inimitable powers muſt direct every line of it to the heart; but in the hands of ſo young and inexperienced an actreſs as Miſs Perry, much could not be expected.—It would be unfair to criticiſe her minutely, becauſe the Manager only is to blame for putting

ſuch an arduous character into her hands.

I have ſeldom ſeen Mrs Kemble to more advantage than in CORA, which was a picture of feeling, conjugal affection, and parental tenderneſs.—I was afraid that ſhe would have got into her. old fault of over-ſtretching her powers, but I am happy to find that ſhe has profited by my advice, and kept within Nature's bounds. In ſuch characters ſhe does honour to herſelf, and gives pleaſure to the audience; but ſhe ſhould not court acquaintance with Letitia Hardy, Lady Teazle, &c. to which ſhe can have no pretenſions. She wiſely did not attempt the ſong in which Mrs Jordan has obtained ſo much applauſe.

The ſcenery was very indifferent, and by no means comes near the ſplendour of

the *Circus*, in which the "Temple of the "Sun" gives a high idea of Peruvian magnificence. The ſtage buſineſs was ſo miſerably conducted too, that the ſcenes intended to have the higheſt effect in the ſolemn and pathetic, excited the riſible faculties of pit, boxes, and gallery.

I am, &c.

EDIN. 6th March, 1800. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

BEGGARS OPERA.

SIR,

A Gentleman, whoſe name I hear is Finlay, was brought forward on Thurſday, in the character of MACHEATH, being his firſt appearance on any ſtage, and, I hope, for his own ſake, that it will be his laſt. Had it been a youthful frolic, it might have been pardonable; but when a

perſon comes to border on half a century, as this gentleman evidently does, ſuch juvenile follies ought to be laid aſide. His figure is ſlender, though not ungenteel—his viſage is not diſagreeable, but it is totally inflexible; indeed he might as well have played in a maſk. Some of his tones had a degree of melody, but he was imperfect in the words of the ſongs, and almoſt conſtantly out of tune. He had not embarraſſment, the uſual drawback of a firſt appearance, to plead his excuſe—on the contrary, he ſeemed perfectly indifferent, and yet his action, which was uniform, was the moſt ungraceful I ever beheld—the right arm half extended, the fore finger pointing, at Heaven knows what, and the left hand hanging by his ſide---perhaps

" He was reſolv'd on ſcripture grounds to go,
" What the right doth, the left hand ſhall not
" know."

He ſeemed to ſhew a gleam of merit in the ſong beginning,

" If the heart of a man is depreſt with cares,"

and here the audience endeavoured to encourage him by applauſe; but all in vain; the very next minute he ſpoke theſe lines, " I muſt have women—there is nothing " unbends the mind like them; money is " not ſo ſtrong a cordial for the time," with as much deſpondency as if he had been Jaffier bemoaning in deſpair—

" I'm here, and thus, the ſhades of night around me,
" I look as if all hell were in my heart."

When the women were introduced to him, inſtead of being all life, ſpirit, and vivacity, he was as diſmal and moroſe as if he had been Young Mirable, ſurrounded with the bravos. Moſt aſſuredly he is none of the deſcendants of Momus---there was

not even a ſmile on his countenance the whole evening. He could neither walk, ſtand, ſpeak, nor ſing; and the whole performance was ſuch a wretched exhibition as I don't recollect ever to have ſeen, except on one occaſion, when a young hero ſome years ago appeared in the Apprentice, who was ſo completely damned, that in a few days thereafter he did

" His quietus make with a bare bodkin."

Now, Sir, I beg leave to ſubmit how far ſuch a manager is excuſable, for permitting *ſuch* an attempt as this. He *ought* to have at leaſt ſome knowlege of theatrical requiſites. His duty is to prevent ſuch obtruſion, and to take care that the public are not impoſed on under the name of novelty. When he acts otherwiſe, with the view of making the beſt of a bad night, as Thurſday generally is, he betrays the truſt

repoſed in him, and deceives the very perſons at whoſe hands he earns his bread.

Mrs Kemble *deigned* to perſonate POLLY, but in a dreſs abſurdly fantaſtic, and no way fitting the daughter of an Engliſh thief-taker. Her ſinging was truly a ſolemn dirge. When ſhe next plays Miſs Peachum, I would recommend to her a little of Lucy's cordial, as her ſpirits ſeemed to require it.

I have formerly mentioned Mr Rock in PEACHUM; except for *his* abilities, this evening's entertainment muſt have been inſufferable. He always commands much well-earned applauſe, and I was ſorry he had not more to do in a piece which was otherwiſe ſo lamely ſupported.

Why did not the Manager play LOCKIT? He ſhould have been making friends

juſt before his benefit, and he would have looked the Jailor well.

I am, &c.

EDIN. 5th April, 1800. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

MACBETH—CLANDESTINE MARRIAGE.

SIR,

IN my laſt I made ſome obſervations on a Mr Finlay, who was lately permitted to appear in Macheath, and I am now to give you a ſhort account of another *debut* equally ridiculous.

On Wedneſday the part of MACBETH was attempted by a perſon aſſuming the name of Langford, of whoſe appearance it might be ſufficient to ſay, that he is com-

pletely a twin brother in ſtupidity to Mr Finlay.

It would, indeed, be a groſs degradation of criticiſm, to notice *all* the defects of theſe adventurers, eſpecially as there were *no* beauties. Mr Langford's figure is about the middle ſize, and tolerably proportioned, but his countenance is juſt what one would ſuppoſe of Squire Gawkey, inſtead of the bold, ſtriking, manly Macbeth. He had, throughout, a harſh, unvaried tone, obſerving neither emphaſis, pauſes, nor breaks—he kept his arms conſtantly extended in a moſt aukward poſition, and his eyes unmeaningly fixed on the roof---amidſt all the pangs of remorſe, in the ſecond act, he was deſpicably unintereſting----inſtead of depicting diſtraction and terror, in the third, where, according to the character, the mind is full of ſcor-

pions, he uttered moſt of the ſpeeches with an air of joy and exultation---in the fourth act he had none of the characteriſtic anxiety----and through all the buſtle and noiſe of the fifth he was inſipidly cool, and wretchedly tame---he adopted the original text, and went off fighting with Macduff, inſtead of giving us the dying ſpeech introduced by Garrick---and if his conqueror had alſo followed the author, by exhibiting his head upon a pike, Melpomene would have had no cauſe to grieve on the occaſion.

Theſe two farcical exhibitions having drawn tolerable houſes, the worthy Manager thought he might play the ſame game on Saturday, and accordingly our Captain Macheath was then brought on as Lord Ogleby in the Clandestine Marriage. After this gentleman had once expe-

rienced the public opinion, and after what has been ſaid of him in the public papers, I wonder at the conſummate impudence that could make him again face the audience. King's unrivalled excellence in the character is well known, and on the preſent occaſion he was imitated moſt abominably—the whole performance was, in the words of Miſs Sterling, " ice and ſnow."

Mr Kemble has thus in one week given us two new proofs of his abſolute contempt of propriety; and that rather than loſe a ſixpence, he would ſuffer people who are unfit even to deliver a meſſage on the ſtage, moſt unhallowedly to murder ſome of the principal characters in the Drama. This is *his* mode of evincing gratitude for patronage, which, by his own admiſſion, was ſuch as will comfort him in his baniſhment. This is ſhowing *his* ſenſe

of the duty he owes that public which has made him what he is,—which even contributed not a little to the reputation of his ſiſter and his brother John.

His conduct too in filling up theſe pieces, further beſpeaks a total diſrepect for the audience. If he really ſuppoſes Mr Siddons fit for Rolla, ought he not to have cauſed him play Banquo?—Bad as he is, I ſhould have wiſhed to have ſeen what he could make of it. Mr Roſs (whoſe name ought hardly to be mentioned amongſt ſuch a group) did not refuſe to act this General when he was at the top of his profeſſion in London; and ſurely Mr Siddons is not entitled to deſpiſe the character.

Miſs Perry, who is no way ſuited for the heroic, was ſet on for LADY MAC-

BETH; and tho' I do not think the caſe would have been much bettered by Mrs Kemble's performance, ſhe would at leaſt have been more acquainted with the buſineſs of the ſtage.

Mr Woods walked through MACDUFF as if the part had been beneath his notice; perhaps he was unwell;—he is beſt judge, but this exhibition was not at all what it ſhould have been.

The Manager's contempt of the town was ſtill more apparent from the caſt of the Clandeſtine Marriage. It ſo happens, that with the preſent company this comedy might have been performed, except Lord Ogleby, better than almoſt any piece that can be brought forward.----And, as Mr Kemble could not but know what a miſerable appearance Mr Finlay was to make,

he ſhould have done his beſt to render the play in other reſpects bearable;----but inſtead of Mr M'Cready playing BRUSH, it was given to Mr Seymour; and although Miſs Perry was very tolerable in FANNY, ſtill Mrs Kemble, whoſe experience is ſo much greater, could have rendered the character as agreeable as any one ſhe plays.

Theſe are facts which cannot be controverted; they ſpeak for themſelves, and prove, that whatever Mr Kemble may artfully ſay on paper, he has no deſire to oblige the public.----But ſince this audience have ſo long ſuffered themſelves to be abuſed and treated with ſuch glaring marks of diſreſpect, they deſerve to be ſo.

I am, &c.

EDIN. 14th April, 1800. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

HAMLET.

SIR,

SINCE I laſt addreſſed you on our dramatic performances, public occurrences of ſuch "pith and moment" have taken place, that I doubt if you can now find room for things of ſo inferior a conſideration as the ſubject of my correſpondence. But looking on the ſtage as the epitome of men and manners, tending in no ſmall degree to the improvement of both, I ſtill preſume to trouble you with ſome obſervations, hoping that a corner may yet be ſpared for their inſertion.

Mr John Kemble, on Monday evening, performed the arduous character of HAMLET. So many commentaries and criticiſms have appeared on this play for a cen-

tury back, that it would be ſuperfluous in me to ſay any thing more, than, that while a taſte for the drama exiſts, this tragedy muſt ever be entertaining and inſtructive.

It may probably be conceived, too, as equally uſeleſs to deſcant on the univerſally admired abilities of this actor. It has, indeed, been ſaid of him in a late publication, that he has brought this character to the very *acmé* of perfection; and I am not diſpoſed to diſpute the aſſertion, although I have ſeen him formerly with more ſatisfaction than I did on the preſent occaſion. I may be miſtaken, but his performance ſtruck me as exceptionable in two places—I think he whined too much in the firſt and ſecond ſcenes. Hamlet is not a child—he is thirty years old; and his grief, therefore, ought to be

given with a manly ſorrow, not the whimpering of a boy. I alſo conſidered his addreſs to Laertes, at the funeral of Ophelia, as not ſufficiently impaſſioned: his attack on this fair one's brother, which, after a rhapſody of bombaſt, finiſhes,

——————" nay, an' thou'lt mouth,
" I'll rant as well as thou."

was made nearly in as gentle a manner as when he told the King

" Your Grace hath laid the odds o' th' weaker
" ſide."

But while impartiality obliges me to ſtate what I conſider as defects, I chearfully agree that Mr Kemble's diſcrimination, and correct accent in general, are ſuperior to any thing I have ſeen in this part, except the cloſet ſcene with the Queen, in which I never found any perſon ſurpaſs the

unfortunate Reddiſh, who ſeemed there really to act from inſpiration.

I have formerly witneſſed Mr Smith's attempts in Royalty—except for the words, he might as well have been any other character as the King of Denmark:—he

——————" Stalk'd about
" Like a ſtrange ſoul upon the Stygian banks,
" Staying for waftage."

Why did not the Manager, in honour of his brother, if he has no reſpect for the town, play the King? It was Mr Jefferſon's part in London, and if that veteran was to hear Mr Stephen Kemble's merit claſſed with his, I imagine he would ſay

" Compariſons are odious."

Kelly might perhaps be ſuffered in Jus-

TICE DORUS or Old CRAZY, but ought to have been ſeverely handled for rendering the whimſical harmleſs Polonius an enfeebled buffoon, contrary to the obvious meaning of the author, and every degree of propriety. I ſee Rock is in town, and I ſhould therefore wiſh to know why he did not play this part.

I cannot prevail on myſelf to condemn either Miſs Perry or Miſs Smith for their inadequate efforts in the QUEEN and OPHELIA. I am ſatisfied that they had no choice, but to pay forfeit, either to the manager or to the town, and they muſt be excuſable for throwing themſelves on the lenity of the latter.—Where was Mrs Kemble that ſhe did not play Ophelia?—is ſhe, "of praiſe ſo mere a glutton," that ſhe cannot bear to ſhare it even with her brother-in-law, or does ſhe mean to

reſerve herſelf now for aſtoniſhing the ſkippers of Shields and Sunderland?

LAERTES, HORATIO, &c. &c. were in ſuch hands that, in the language of the piece, it would be a vice either to know or note them.

I obſerve that a new correſpondent has lately taken notice of this being advertiſed, as "the laſt engagement Mr John "Kemble can ever make in Scotland," which intimation the manager tells us is by *authority*. Such language ſeems to be a declaration that Mr Kemble has no reſpect for the Edinburgh audience, but viſits us ſolely on account of his brother. As the advertiſement ſtands, I am warranted in this ſuppoſition, and if I am right, I muſt ſay, in addition to what your correſpondent has ſo properly ob-

ſerved, that if the audience had the ſame ſpirit they poſſeſſed at the time they originally cheriſhed this performer, they would now have made him either deny the authority, or have hooted him off the ſtage; becauſe valuable as his exhibitions are, I for one, would rather want any pleaſure they can afford, than be gratified by them on ſuch conditions. Theſe gentry ought not to forget themſelves, but recollect that petulance, however characteriſtic, always deſerves to be checked.

I cannot conclude without noticing the ſtrange deſcriptions in which I have been held up to the public. A certain *Reverend* Gentleman, very ſhrewdly diſcovered, about two years ago, that I was an under candle-ſnuffer in the play-houſe; and ſome votary of Apollo has lately transformed me into a fat, ugly, gouty,

greaſy writer's clerk. Into what other form or profeſſion I ſhall next be metamorphoſed, will depend upon the protean imagination of ſome genius ſimilar to thoſe who have already been ſo fortunate in their diſcoveries.

I am, &c.

EDIN. 17th July, 1800. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

RICHARD THE THIRD.

SIR,

I HAVE ſeen many actors attempt RICHARD THE THIRD, but very few who came up to my ideas of the character—the beſt I ever ſaw was Bath Lee. I know he was accuſed of copying Garrick, which perhaps was true----but be that as it may, he was at leaſt a good imitation. I have heard much of Mr John Kemble's Richard, and

I went to ſee him in it on Monday; he rather out-figures the crook-back'd villain, but he was very characteriſtic in the unnatural ſcene where he wins Lady Anne's love at the funeral of her huſband's father----he was a good hypocrite when the mayor and citizens are brought by Buckingham to offer him the crown---he was the bold undaunted tyrant when his mother and the queen upbraid him with the murders they enumerate; and he ſupported the laſt act

——" While the angry trumpet ſounds alarms,
" And dying groans tranſpierce the wounded air,"

with an uncommon glow of rage and rapid climaxes of expreſſion----he, however, was languid, and not ſufficiently intereſting in the ſoliloquies, which he rather ſlurred over, neither giving them ſo emphatically as he ought to have done, nor duly regarding the requiſite pauſes.

Mr S. Kemble *deigned* to perform KING HENRY—he ſeemed to underſtand the character well enough, but his "fair round belly" prevented the audience from believing that he "and ill-fortune were familiar"----his recounting Glo'ſter's cruelties, and the ſingularities attending his birth, was very energetic; but when he fell! the ears of the audience were rent in twain!---the houſe ſhook!---"Didſt thou not hear the noiſe?"

Mr Woods made as much of BUCKINGHAM as the part would admit of.

A Mr Seymour perſonated RICHMOND ---whence this *hero* came, I know not, neither do I think I ſhall ever wiſh to know. The part requires a good figure, free deportment, with mellifluous, ſpirited expreſ-

ſion; but Mr Seymour would have been happier in Coſtard, repeating

" I Pompey am, Pompey ſurnam'd the Big,
" That oft in field, with targe and ſhield,
" Did make my foe to ſweat."

Miſs Perry and Miſs Smith, in QUEEN ELIZABETH and LADY ANNE,

——" Cramm'd their words into mine ears, againſt
" The ſtomach of my ſenſe."

More than three years have now elapſed, Mr Editor, ſince I commenced your correſpondent; and I am ſorry that, during the whole period of it, I ſhould have had little elſe to do than point out faults. As this is the laſt time I ſhall trouble you during Mr Kemble's reign, I cannot avoid repeating the glaring parſimony of the Manager as to performers and every append-

age of the Theatre----he is about to exhibit before audiences, which, without any diſparagement to them, cannot rank with thoſe of Edinburgh. In the words which he has ſo feelingly uſed upon the ſubject himſelf, he is going into *baniſhment*; but I think his whole conduct has proved that it is more *ſubſtantial* conſiderations which make him ſo much regret the loſs of this Theatre. I have no doubt that he would perform before an aſſemblage of poiſſardes, as chearfully as before the firſt in the kingdom, provided more money was to be got by it---I believe his creed to be,

"Money, money, money ſtill,
"Let honour follow when it will."

He has, however, *profeſſed* wonderfully well; and, as I wiſh to conclude the farce conſiſtently, I would beg leave to inform him, that if, at taking leave of us, he

——————" hath not a woman's gift,
" To rain a ſhower of commanded tears,
" An onion will do well for ſuch a ſhift;
" Which, in a napkin being cloſe convey'd,
" Shall in deſpight enforce a wat'ry eye."

To Mr Kemble I now ſay " Farewel." I imagine it is unneceſſary to add---" Remember me."

I am, &c.

EDIN. 24th July, 1800. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

MR. KEMBLE'S LAST ADDRESS TO THE AUDIENCE.

SIR,

ALTHOUGH I did not intend to have troubled you again this ſeaſon, I think it would be a pity to omit Mr Kemble's *laſt ſpeech*, at taking leave of the audience on Wedneſday evening, as it was

certainly the moſt extroordinary ever uttered on the boards of a Theatre.

Soon after the curtain had dropt at the end of Pizarro, it was again drawn, and the ſtage thrown open. Mr Kemble advanced, and, after thanking the public for having generouſly ſupported him " on " many trying occaſions," he ſpoke in ſubſtance to this effect :—That though his followers might be more ſucceſsful, " they " could not be more ambitious or anxi- " ous to pleaſe :"—That he thought he might almoſt take it upon him to aſſert, he *had* given ſatisfaction.—Here he was interrupted, with conſiderable murmurs, and ſome hiſſing—He continued :—" I " once thought to have left Edinburgh " without a ſingle enemy behind me."—The hiſſing then increaſed,—but he proceeded—" It is however not wonderful

that I am diſappointed, for even OUR GREAT REDEEMER had his enemies; and, after his great example, (clapping both hands upon his great fat paunch), I will be meek and ſubmiſſive—!!!" Here he was ſtopped—" Off---off---Away, away, Sir---Get off, Sir---Toſs the fellow in a blanket," (by the way no eaſy taſk), being then echo'd from the pit, boxes, and gallery.---This ſtung home---and Mr Kemble, now forgetting the character of *meekneſs* he had undertaken to perſonate,

———" bellow'd out,
" As he'd burſt Heav'n,"

" I *will* be heard---I *will* and I *ſhall* be heard."

By the boiſterous action which accompanied theſe *ſubmiſſive* expreſſions, the mighty frame of this " oily man of words," ſhook to its centre, ſo that while

his effrontery ſeemed to entitle him to add, like Drawcanſir,

" And all this I dare do, becauſe I dare,"

the audience obſerved, that he might properly have ſaid with Prince Volſcius,

" My legs, the emblem of my various thought,
" Show to what ſad diſtraction I am brought."

Indeed he became

——————" more mad
" Than Telamon for his ſhield; the boar of Theſ-
" ſaly
" Was never ſo imboſs'd;

and, in the moſt frantic manner, he again profanely repeated the name of our Great Redeemer!

The indignation of the audience at ſuch a blaſphemous compariſon, then burſt into a perfect flame.

Meanwhile poor Mrs Kemble was ſeen behind the ſcenes, drowned in tears, and,

in a paroxyſm of grief and terror, on the point of ruſhing upon the ſtage, to endeavour to drag off

"This good huſband, as meek as a lamb."

But the ſtorm rapidly thickening from all corners of the houſe, and becoming every moment more terrible, a regard to the comfort of enjoying a ſound nap in a ſound ſkin---natural to all men---peculiarly ſo to a man of Mr Kemble's kidney, quickly produced the deſired effect, without the neceſſity of another performer in the ſcene; and the Manager, who had thus given "a touch of his quality" was *obliged* to retire, rolling the one ſhoulder before the other, like a Dutch long boat, amidſt the hootings and hiſſings of the whole houſe; indeed with every degree of contumely ſhort of perſonal chaſtiſement.

Thus was the ſtage---the ſchool of mo-

rality, " whoſe end both at firſt and now, " was and is, to ſhow virtue her own fea- " ture," moſt vilely abuſed, by an impi- ous alluſion, from the mouth of a pſeudo player,

" A puff of bad paſte, a gingerbread king,"

who in his ſtrolling excurſions will now have an opportunity of following " a great " example" more in character to him, I mean that of Theſpis, who though

——————" the firſt that did ſurpriſe the age
" With Tragedy, ne'er trod a decent ſtage;
" But in a waggon drove his plays about,
" And ſhow'd mean antic tricks to pleaſe the " rout."

I am yours, &c.

EDIN. 2d. Aug. 1800. TIMOTHY PLAIN.

FINIS.

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